

# Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

## Operators by the hundreds register on FTA Website

WASHINGTON — The new charter service rule that requires motorcoach companies to register with the Federal Transit Administration — to be notified of charter work being offered by public transit agencies — is drawing a torrid response from private coach operators.

And some worries from federal regulators.

### Maine carriers battle possible use-tax change

AUGUSTA, Maine — For nearly 30 years, motorcoach operators in Maine have largely been exempt from the state use tax on new motorcoach purchases.

But a revised interpretation of the law granting the exemption is threatening operators with tens of thousands of dollars in taxes and, for one large operator, hundreds of thousands of dollars.

To deal with the issue, Maine operators have formed a new statewide coalition, retained a lobbyist, called in the United Motorcoach Association for assistance, requested a meeting with the governor, and solicited support from state and regional tourism organizations.

"We had to take a stand or they would kill us," said Ray Penfold, general manager of VIP Tour & Charter Bus Co. in Portland, Maine, and a member of the new motorcoach coalition.

The issue is being seen by some as having implications for operators in other states that grant use-tax exemptions for vehicles. If Maine succeeds in lifting the exemption for its operators, then other states likely would be emboldened to do the same.

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More than 800 operators — or about 25 percent of the private companies licensed in the U.S. — joined the electronic registry in the first few weeks of the sign-up period.

Although federal regulators are pleased with the response, they also warn there is potential for problems because many of the operators are requesting they be notified of any charter work any-

where in the United States.

"Private operators are registering for the entire U.S. without understanding the implications," said FTA spokesman Paul Griffio.

The new rule, which is part of a major overhaul of the charter rules that are to take effect April 30, drastically changes the way public transit agencies notify motorcoach operators of charters they would

like to do, but which they first must offer to private carriers.

It ends the "willing-and-able" public notice procedure that transit agencies have had to follow for many years, replacing it with a Web-based registry that coach operators may join.

Under the new process, the transit agencies will be required to send an e-mail to each registered

operator that has declared a willingness to work in the area where the charter is to take place.

Many of the federal officials and public and private operators who were involved in writing the new charter rules expected most operators to sign up for work within their own states and possibly in some adjacent states. A much

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### Chinese tourists heading to U.S., may be bonanza

Motorcoach operators in the U.S. and Canada appear to be in a strong position to reap the benefits of a major wave of Chinese tourists coming to North America as soon as next year, with travel experts predicting nearly 600,000 Chinese vacationers will be visiting the United States annually by 2011.

The National Tour Association, working through the U.S. Department of Commerce, is trying to pave the way for what many believe is potentially a significant new market for the motorcoach industry.

In late February, NTA announced that the Chinese National Tourism Administration had approved NTA's China Inbound Program proposal.

NTA will provide the Chinese agency with a list of tour operators qualified to conduct leisure group travel from China to the United States. At the same time, NTA will assist tour operators in working with Chinese travel agencies.

NTA's initiative coincides with the United States and China signing a memorandum of understanding in December that gives the U.S. "approved destination status" (known as ADS in the travel industry).

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**Mega Expansion.** megabus.com announced an ambitious expansion of its discount curbside service into the northeastern U.S., where it will go head to head with BoltBus and ethnic operators. Story page 3.

### Canadian carriers embrace seatbelts

TORONTO — The Canadian motorcoach industry has decided to work with the Canadian government to develop standards for seatbelts in motorcoaches.

The industry's leading spokesman, Brian Crow, president and CEO of Motor Coach Canada and the Ontario Motor Coach Association, said more and more Canadian passengers are requesting seatbelts in coaches.

"What's driving this is consumer demand," he said.

The industry plans to work

with Transport Canada, the federal agency that sets vehicle safety standards, to conduct bus crash tests this summer that will be specifically designed to develop seatbelt standards. The tests are not expected to address other coach-related safety issues such as roof or window strength.

Crow reports that a number of Canadian motorcoach operators already have begun retrofitting their buses with seatbelts because of passenger demand.

They are doing this despite the

absence of standards.

And at least one Canadian operator reportedly purchased new Setra coaches because it could get factory-installed seatbelts.

Other factors thought to be influencing Canadian operators to take action:

- A major oil company in Calgary no longer will charter coaches to take its workers to the oil fields in Alberta unless the buses have seatbelts.
- There have been reports that

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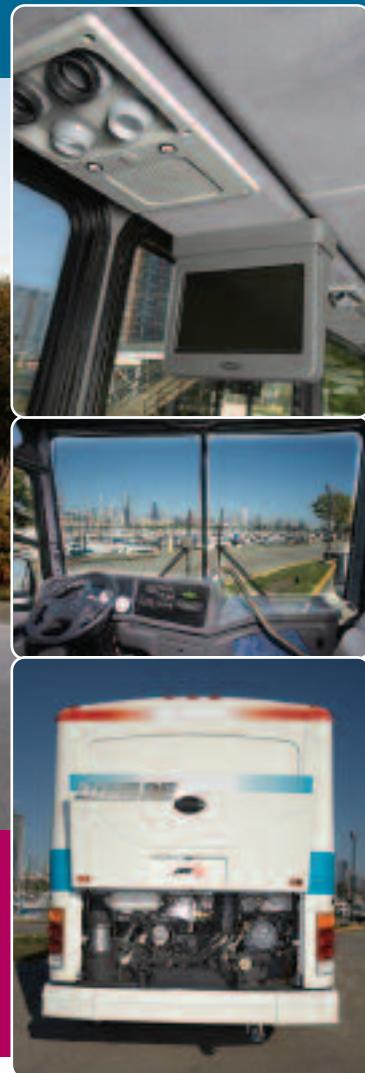
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## Princess Tours driver program offers students college credit

FAIRBANKS, Alaska — Princess Tours, one of the largest tour bus operators in Alaska, has developed a driver training program that gives college credit through the University of Alaska.

Every year, Princess Tours hires scores of college students to serve as driver-guides on its tour coaches in Alaska. To prepare students for the summer jobs, Princess Tours operates a commercial driver training program.

This year, students can earn credit through the University of Alaska Fairbanks by completing

the program, and the credits can be transferred to colleges and universities nationwide.

Students participating in the program will qualify to receive three credits for ABUS 267, Transportation and Logistics Management, a course in the Applied Business Department of the university.

Princess is the first tour company in Alaska, and perhaps the U.S., offering a program where students can earn university credits by completing a motorcoach driver training course.

Students completing the pro-

gram conduct tours for visitors on various routes throughout Alaska during the summer tourism season, which begins May 4. The driver-guides often also provide narrative information for passengers to give them more appreciation of the state's many attractions. They also learn basic maintenance and mechanical duties.

"We're so pleased the University of Alaska Fairbanks has recognized the high quality of our driver training programs by deeming them worthy of college credits,"

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## Priority One of Dallas changes hands

DALLAS — Priority One Transportation, a diversified Dallas-based motorcoach operator, has been acquired by Wynne Sedan & Limousine Group, also of Dallas.

Priority One was purchased from Dan O'Meara, who remains with the company, along with his staff, to operate the business as a separate entity. Among Priority One's principal markets are corpo-

rate transportation, destination management services, and collegiate and professional sports teams.

The company has a fleet of motorcoaches, midsize and limo buses, vans, town cars and a 1940 Packard. Annual revenue is \$2 million.

Wynne Sedan & Limousine is a 22-year-old company that, with the acquisition, becomes one of the 35 largest chauffeured transportation

providers in the U.S.

Phillip Capers, Wynne's CFO, said the acquisition will have both a positive top-line revenue and bottom-line profit impact on Wynne's 2008 financials.

Capers also announced that Wynne will be adopting the same USDOT standards for its limousine, sedan, SUV, van and midsize bus drivers as has been required of

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## megabus.com joins crowded northeastern market May 30

motorcoaches," said Dale Moser, president and chief operating officer of megabus.com.

In an effort to grab a quick foothold in the market, megabus.com is offering free fares for all travel booked to depart during the first week of service — May 30-June 5. The customary 50-cent booking fee will still apply.

"The overwhelming popularity of megabus.com's innovative, express bus service prompted us to expand to the East Coast," said Moser.... "As the leader in providing budget intercity express coach services, megabus.com looks forward to serving East Coast travelers with the same passion and exceptional value for money our customers have come to expect."

Beginning May 30, East Coast residents will be able to travel on megabus.com from New York to Boston, Washington, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Buffalo, N.Y., and Atlantic City, N.J., in the U.S., plus Toronto in Canada.

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However, some approvals and pick-up locations were still pending as of early this month. Nevertheless, reservations for most cities were being taken at [www.megabus.com](http://www.megabus.com).

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# THE DOCKET

## Minnesota limits road tolling, blocks highway privatization

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Minnesota has become the first state to stem the tide of toll road creation and privatization of roadways.

When Minnesota legislators passed the Transportation Finance Bill they not only prohibited any state authority from ever converting any existing highway to a toll road but also prohibited any road authority from transferring, whether by sale or lease, any roadway to a private party for it to operate.

The legislation also prohibits requiring commercial vehicles to use any tolled roadway.

Additionally, passage of the bill was notable because it involved a rare veto override and the first fuel tax increase in Minnesota in 20 years (see April 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*).

## Ky. considers tolling agency

FRANKFORT, Ky. — The Kentucky legislature is considering legislation that would create a statewide authority with the power to levy tolls to pay for major state highway projects.

A bill establishing the Kentucky Public Transportation Infrastructure Authority (House Bill 689) has passed the state House and been sent to the state Senate — where it faces opposition and a competing bill.

The authority that would be set up under the House bill would levy tolls to pay for state highway "mega-projects," which are defined as projects costing more than \$500 million.

Falling into this category is the proposed \$4.1 billion Ohio River Bridges Project (two bridges and the untangling of the current interstate maze in downtown Louisville known as "Spaghetti Junction"). Also at stake are a major bridge

Toll roads and other alternative financing arrangements that were established prior to Sept. 1, 2007, are not affected by the law. Nor is the construction of new general-purpose lanes, such as high-occupancy toll lanes added to existing highways.

An experimental shoulder-lane project, included in an agreement with the federal government, is also exempt from the prohibition. Under the plan, narrow bus-only shoulder lanes along Interstate 35W in Minneapolis will be converted to toll lanes.

Buses and other high-occupancy vehicles will operate at no charge in these lanes. However, during peak times single-occupant vehicles will be allowed to use the lanes if they pay a toll.

reconstruction of the Interstate 71/75 Brent Spence Bridge between Kentucky and Ohio, and two proposed interstate projects.

Meanwhile, the Senate has allocated \$430 million in state road funds for the Louisville bridges. But opponents say the Senate budget plan would consume an average of 42 percent of Kentucky's federal road dollars over the next two years. It also falls short of Kentucky's \$2.9 billion share of the project.

The Senate also is considering Senate Bill 7, which calls for creating local funding authorities to handle local projects, rather than a statewide authority that would finance all large projects.

Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear has urged the legislature to solve the funding problem one way or another before the legislative session ends this month.

## Idaho fee bill could be costly

BOISE, Idaho — The Idaho legislature is considering bills that would boost registration fees for commercial vehicles to help make up a shortfall of \$200 million in state transportation funding.

One bill introduced in the state Senate aims to raise an additional \$57.5 million annually for highway funding through higher registration fees.

All commercial vehicles weighing more than 8,000 pounds would

see a significant increase in fees.

For example, commercial vehicles weighing between 30,000 and 40,000 pounds would pay a registration fee of \$379, up from \$291, while vehicles weighing between 40,001 and 50,000 pounds would pay a fee of \$460, up from \$360.

Sponsors of the legislation say it is not designed to punish heavy vehicle operators, rather it is meant to simplify a convoluted system of fee schedules and applicability.

## Construction begins around Mount Vernon

MOUNT VERNON, Va. — Operators sending coaches to Washington, D.C. this summer need to be alert to a construction project along the George Washington Memorial Parkway and around George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens here.

The National Park Service, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration, has begun making construction upgrades to Mount Vernon Circle and to parking lots adjacent to the Mount Vernon estate.

The project, expected to be completed by fall, will reconfigure traffic through Mount Vernon Circle, extend the Mount Vernon Trail, resurface existing parking lots, add 150 parking spaces for visitor use, and improve visitor access.

Construction will include grading, pavement resurfacing, utility and drainage improvements, a trail extension, and sidewalk addition.

The Park Service says the work is not expected to present major impacts to visitors using the George Washington Memorial Parkway or going to the Mount Vernon estate.

All travel lanes are to remain open northbound and southbound during rush hours from 5 to 9:30 a.m. and from 3 to 7 p.m.

Signs and variable message boards will be posted for any lane closures, detours and delays during the construction process.

Additional information about the project can be found at [www.eft.fhwa.dot.gov/traffic-advisory.aspx](http://www.eft.fhwa.dot.gov/traffic-advisory.aspx), or by calling (703) 404-6260 or (800) 892-8776 weekdays between 7:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.

## Charter notice

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 provide the service. UMA urges appropriate operators to take the time to respond to this notice.

**Jefferson City, Mo.** Deadline: April 21, 2008. Write to: Richard Turner, Transit Division Director, City of Jefferson, Department of Community Development, 320 E. McCarty St., Jefferson City, MO 65101. Phone: (573) 634-6599.

## Congestion plan for NYC back under consideration

NEW YORK — The New York General Assembly is considering new legislation that would allow New York City to charge an \$8 toll for all vehicles, with the possible exception of buses, entering Manhattan below 60th Street between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The goal of the plan is to reduce the number of vehicles on city streets, thereby improving traffic movement and air quality.

The estimated \$491 million that would be generated annually from the plan would be earmarked for transit projects around the city.

Passing the plan, which requires city and state approval, is essential to receiving a \$354 million federal grant for bus and subway improvements.

In announcing his support for the congestion pricing plan for New York City, new Gov. David Paterson said "congestion pricing addresses two urgent concerns of residents of the city and its suburbs: the need to reduce congestion on our streets and roads, and thereby reduce pollution and glob-

al warming; and the need to raise significant revenue for mass transit improvements."

Paterson coupled his announcement with introduction of a bill that would essentially set up the congestion pricing plan and fulfill the requirements for the \$354 million federal grant.

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg praised Paterson's bill, saying it will "reduce traffic, cut pollution and raise revenue for transit projects."

Bloomberg's original plan to charge motorists a fee to drive into Manhattan's central business district has been modified by both New York DOT and the Congestion Mitigation Commission since it was announced last year. (See May 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Revisions to the plan have included shrinking the pricing zone, charging taxis and black cars a surcharge for driving in the zone, and exempting all buses from the proposed \$8 fee.

The plan must be approved by both state lawmakers and the city council.

## Report warns of congestion costs at Canada/U.S. border

WASHINGTON — A new report says relieving bottlenecks at the U.S./Canada border should be made a high-profile issue during the U.S. presidential election.

The report says Canada and the U.S. must work together to develop a "border of the future" that would take advantage of new technology to smooth the flow of people and goods across the frontier.

The report also calls on both countries to improve border infrastructure such as bridges, ports of entry, rail lines and seaports.

The report was published by several groups, including the Brookings Institution, the Washington think tank.

John Austin, director of Brookings' Great Lakes Economic Initiative, said decision makers must think of the region from upstate New York to Minnesota, including the southern portions of Ontario and Quebec, as a single region linked by the Great Lakes.

"We're not islands; we're mutually dependent," Austin told a

wire service. "We need an attitude adjustment. We have powerful attributes that we can build on and benefit from, if we have effective leadership."

He said that growth in the region must be a federal priority.

"There's an obsession with China around the globe," Austin said. "We do more trade with Canada in one day than we do over weeks and months with China."

The report points out that trade crossing the Ambassador Bridge in a single day matches the annual total of U.S. exports to Japan.

The report is critical of increased security initiatives.

"What really alarms us is the speed at which these new requirements are being put on border crossings," said Sarah Hubbard, vice president of government relations with the Detroit Regional Chamber. "We depend on a free flow of traffic with Canada."

The report says both countries should have a strategy in place by 2015 to reduce congestion and red tape at the border.

# Drivers with sleep apnea may have to get treatment

WASHINGTON — The medical review board of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration is expected to issue recommendations this month that would require commercial vehicle drivers with obstructive sleep apnea to get treatment before they are allowed to drive.

The recommendations are designed to curb drowsiness among commercial vehicle drivers, especially truckers, as well as act on medical findings regarding the sleep disorder.

People who have obstructive sleep apnea wake up frequently during sleep because the disorder causes their airways to partially close. The constant awakening, once every minute or two in severe cases, makes them unusually drowsy during their waking periods. That makes them especially risky for driving over-the-road vehicles.

A major contributor to the condition is obesity, says Allan Pack, director of the Center for Sleep and

## Ill.-Missouri in agreement on new bridge

ST. LOUIS — Missouri and Illinois have (finally) agreed on construction of a \$640 million bridge to be built on Interstate 70 over the Mississippi River here.

Under the agreement, the New Mississippi River Bridge will be built in the location originally approved by the Federal Highway Administration in 2001, which is one mile north of the Martin Luther King Bridge in north St. Louis.

The bridge will have four lanes, two lanes in each direction, with room to expand to six lanes. The bridge will connect I-70 at the I-55/I-64/I-70 interchange on the Illinois side to I-70 near Cass Avenue on the Missouri side. The bridge will not charge tolls.

Design for the project will begin immediately, with construction starting as early as 2010 and lasting four to six years.

The New Mississippi River Bridge is expected to reduce severe traffic congestion and vehicle crashes on the Poplar Street Bridge.

Currently, the Poplar Street Bridge carries combined traffic for Interstates 55, 64 and 70 — an average of 115,000 and 125,000 vehicles daily. It was projected that by 2030, it would carry more than 150,000 vehicles daily if no additional major river bridge crossing were constructed.

Visit [www.newriverbridge.org](http://www.newriverbridge.org) for more information.

Respiratory Neurobiology at the University of Pennsylvania and adviser to the medical review board.

The board is expected to recommend that commercial truckers be required to undergo a sleep study once they reach a certain level of

obesity. But there apparently is no agreement yet at what level of obesity should the benchmark be set.

If the agency eventually approves the recommendation, drivers would have to be treated for the condition to get certified. The range of treatment modules avail-

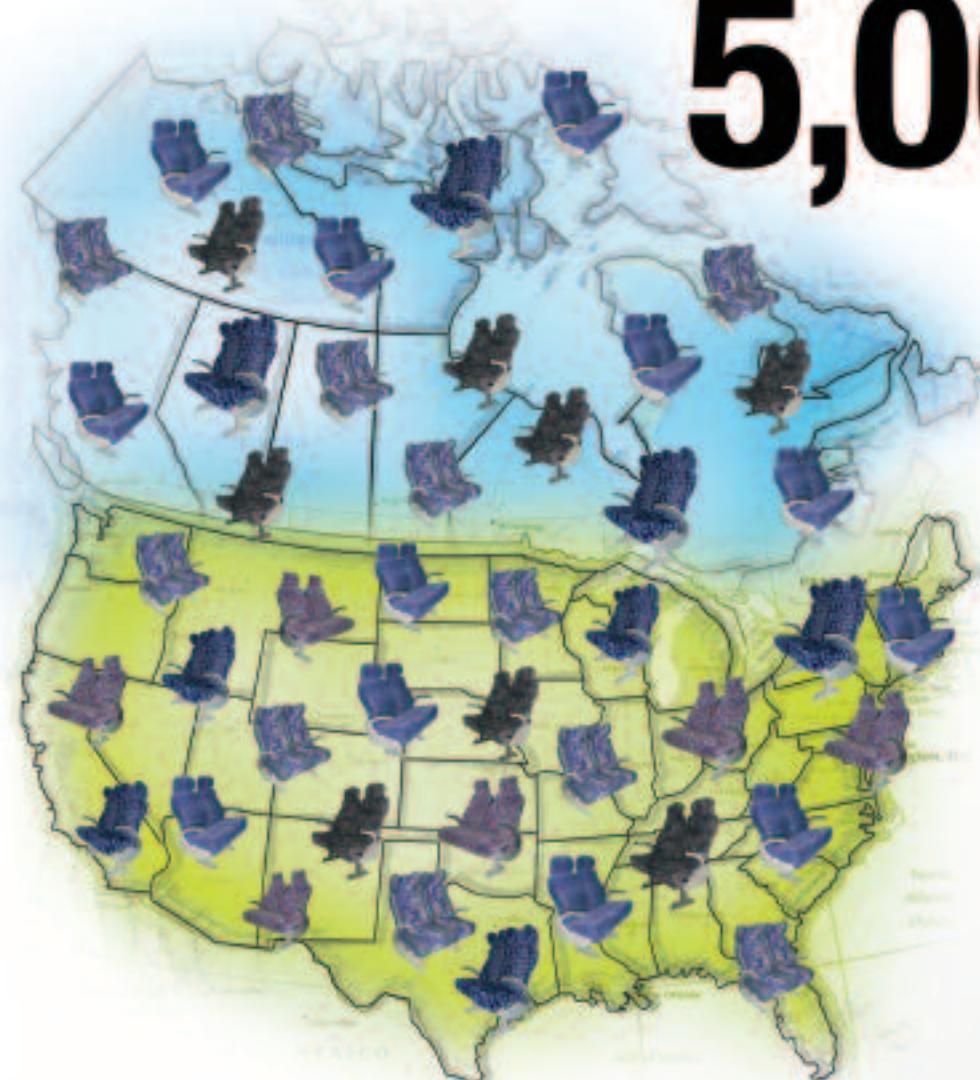
able for obstructive sleep apnea includes surgery or putting on a mask while sleeping to allow air into the body's airway.

A study by the agency of commercial driver license holders showed that 17.6 percent of licensed truckers had mild sleep

apnea, another 5.8 percent had moderate sleep apnea and 4.7 percent suffer from severe sleep apnea.

According to one expert, drivers with obstructive sleep apnea are 2 1/2 times more at risk of being involved in a crash. And the crashes tend to be more severe.

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## Chinese tourists

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try). The memorandum provides the necessary framework to permit Chinese much-expanded group leisure travel to the U.S. In addition, U.S. travel destinations will be able to market in China.

NTA President Lisa Simon said the likelihood of a substantial increase in Chinese travelers will be very good for the motorcoach industry.

In 2006, China ranked as the 17th largest international market for the United States, with more than 320,000 Chinese business visitors. But with the new agreement Chinese ordinary citizens may now travel to the U.S. in groups for leisure purposes.

"We anticipate they will be more than comfortable with bus travel in the United States," Simon said. "And as we in the industry know — traveling on today's motorcoach is traveling first class."

### Understanding the market

Simon said the Chinese government wants to ensure that tour operators and their supplier partners understand the unique wants and needs of Chinese travelers, and that language will not be a barrier

to them enjoying their vacation. She added that NTA tour operators will be looking to their motorcoach company partners to help them meet these needs through "customization and flexibility."

NTA provided market information and education on best practices through seminars at the association's Tour Operator Spring Meet earlier this month, and will continue the initiative at the NTA annual convention in November and in a series of online opportunities.

"Additionally," Simon said, "NTA will be submitting the official list of approved operators to the CNTA in the coming weeks, at which point, motorcoach companies may market their products and services directly to those who will be handling the inbound Chinese business."

Beth Terry, who discussed the "new Asian tourism influx" at the American Bus Association Marketplace in Virginia Beach in February, told *Bus & Motorcoach News* that China is quickly becoming one of the hottest outbound tourism markets in the world.

Terry, who has a strong background in tourism and owns Beth Terry Seminars Inc., based in Phoenix, said: "Although still in its infancy, the China market is being

actively courted by tourism destinations across the world that seek to attract China's projected 100 million international travelers by 2020."

### Huge potential market

Last year, 30 million Chinese got permission to travel, a first step before obtaining a visa, Terry said.

Terry said there will be two levels of Chinese tourists, similar to those from Japan.

"They will be either incredibly wealthy and won't get on a motorcoach unless they rent one for themselves and their friends, or like the average Japanese, they will be great with tours and will love getting on a bus," Terry said. "They prefer to have a tour guide with them."

Terry recommends that motorcoach operators make the experience comfortable for Chinese visitors by having a well-trained staff.

"Having someone in China or connected to China will help you understand the market," Terry said. "If they have a good experience, they'll go home and tell their friends. If they have a bad experience, well, they'll tell their friends that, too."

Motorcoach and tour operators could have a problem if they show any perceived sign of disrespect or fail to provide Chinese visitors with

their favorite food, Terry said.

"Learn what translates well," Terry said. "Chinese love it when you're humble. It's important to understand nuances. Many Chinese don't like credit cards or checks. They pay with cash. Never talk about Tiananmen Square, and never ask them a question that they can't answer without looking stupid. When dealing with any Asian tourist, 'face' is paramount."

On her Website, [www.bethterry.com](http://www.bethterry.com), Terry cites advice and insight from Calvin Sun, an American-born Chinese, who is principal of Technology Horizons of Paoli, Pa., a consulting firm.

Sun, like Terry, emphasizes the need to be humble and modest. "Therefore, be careful about agreeing with compliments about your staff or other aspects of your business," he said. "Instead, consider saying how you try your best but you realize you always can do better."

Terry said the most popular U.S. destinations for Chinese tourists would be the national parks, including the Grand Canyon and Mount Rushmore, and Disneyland. "They want to see things that are different from China," Terry said.

### European perspective

Last fall, Lancer Insurance con-

ducted a two-day program in New York — for policyholders who are members of the International Motor Coach Group — that included a session on Chinese tourism. One of the speakers was Dr. Wolfgang Georg Arlt, who has 30 years experience with China and Chinese tourism and is director of the China Outbound Tourism Research Institute in Heide, Germany.

Arlt sees benefits ahead for motorcoach operators. In Europe, for example, most of the Chinese tour groups travel by motorcoach, he told *Bus & Motorcoach News* in an e-mail.

"In China this is the 'normal' short- to middle-distance transport system below 1,000 kilometers (620 miles)," he said.

Chinese leisure visitors are likely to consist of the top 5 percent of society, meaning "these people can afford travel to the USA and Canada," Arlt said. "Their spending power is substantial."

To cash in on the potential bonanza, Arlt urges motorcoach operators to understand the source market thoroughly, especially the cultural differences.

"Chinese have been waiting to be able to travel to their No. 1 dream country, so this will happen starting in 2009," Arlt says.

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# Being 'thrown under the bus' becomes popular cliche

From the tar pits of the blogosphere to the peaks of the mainstream media, one strange phrase has bubbled up in the wake of Sen. Barack Obama's speech on race in America: "He didn't throw him under the bus."

The "him" is the Rev. Jeremiah Wright Jr., Obama's former pastor, whose angry and racially charged sermons have sparked controversy that could undercut Obama's presidential candidacy.

But the metaphor — "throw him under the bus" — is tougher to explain.

Where did it come from? Why is it suddenly ubiquitous? And at the risk of sounding overly sensitive, is it even advisable, given its ugly echo with the "back of the bus" legacy of African-Americans?

In the last few years, "thrown under the bus" has become the leading cliché of the political blame game. Former Arkansas attorney general Bud Cummins used it to assess the fate of nine colleagues who were mysteriously dismissed in 2006; rocker Melissa Etheridge used it last year to characterize the lives of gays and lesbians after the 1992 presidential election, and earlier this year MSNBC political reporter David Schuster claimed he was "thrown under the bus" for an uncouth on-air remark he made about Chelsea Clinton.

In general, "thrown under the bus" is a metaphor for what happens when someone takes a hit for someone else's actions. But unlike its etymological cousins, "scapegoat" and "fall guy," the phrase suggests a degree of intimacy between the blamer and the blamed.

That's why it might have been

on the tip of everyone's tongue this week. Jeremiah Wright was Obama's religious mentor, after all, the person who officiated at his marriage and baptized his kids. And while Obama distanced himself from Wright's sermons, he also humanized the fiery preacher by attributing his remarks to the lingering injuries of racism.

In other words, according CNN's senior political analyst David Gergen: "He didn't throw him under the bus."

Another reason for the star turn of the phrase could be the lazy nature of the human mind. In live conversation, people unconsciously grab the first phrase that comes to them, which more often than not is what someone else just said, according to Geoff Nunberg, the one-time chairman of the American Heritage Dictionary's usage panel and now a linguist at UC-Berkeley's School of Information.

The same plagiaristic habit is on display in the film *The Big Lebowski*, where characters repeat lines scene to scene. (The Dude, for example, says "ya know, this aggression will not stand, man," after he hears the first President Bush use it on television.) The underlying principle is simple: once a person says "throw him under the bus," the phrase lodges itself in the foreground of the mind, where it becomes the first phrase retrieved in conversation. Parrots do the same thing.

But who was the first person to squawk about throwing someone under the bus, or being thrown under themselves? In an interview with *Newsweek*, William Safire, the author of "Safire's Political Dictionary," traced the populariza-

tion of the phrase back to Cyndi Lauper, who jauntily tossed her critics "under the bus" after the release of her debut album *She's So Unusual* in 1983, says Safire.

But he suspects that the phrase has deeper roots in minor-league baseball, where players are almost always bused to away games. In fact, its original meaning could have been quite literal: be on time for the bus, or you will be thrown underneath it, into the storage bays. He says the metaphor has also been used as a way to say "get with it, or get lost," as in "you're either on the bus, or you're under it."

He isn't quite sure when the meaning of the phrase crystallized into the act of "summarily and decisively rejecting someone."

What's most striking about the sudden ubiquity of "thrown under the bus" is that it doesn't seem to fill any particular need. It does the same work as 'thrown off a pier' or 'tossed out a window,' according to Nunberg, the Berkeley linguist, who declined to add yet another theory to origin of the phrase ("Maybe it was rockers. Maybe it was baseball. The fact is these things tend to grow etymologies after the fact," he says.)

Neither Nunberg nor Safire think the phrase harkens back to Rosa Parks or the Montgomery bus boycotts of 1955, when African-Americans protested the law that forced them to sit in the "back of the bus." Good to know. But it's still a drain to hear the same phrase over and over, channel after channel, column after column. It might be time to throw "under the bus" under the bus.

*Taken from Newsweek magazine.*

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## Obama's speech gets 'thrown under the bus'

Poor Barack Obama's grandmother. She may never ride public transportation again.

Not after the beating — actually, tossing — she got in her grandson's speech on the Rev. Jeremiah Wright. You'll remember these words from Obama:

"I can no more disown him than I can disown the black community. I can no more disown him than I can my white grandmother — a woman who helped raise me, a woman who sacrificed again and again for me, a woman who loves me as much as she loves anything in this world, but a woman who once confessed her fear of black men who passed by her on the street, and who on more than one occasion has uttered racial or ethnic stereotypes that made me cringe. These people are a part of me. And they are a part of America, this country that I love."

Since that speech, observers agree on one thing — Obama's white grandmother got pushed under the bus. Again. And again. And again. Taking over from where throwing momma from the train left off, grandmothers and motorcoaches are now front and center.

In fact, buses may not have gotten this much attention since Keanu Reeves tried to save one in *Speed*.

Consider...

- Ann Coulter: "Obama felt perfectly comfortable throwing his white grandmother under the bus"

- Gateway Pundit: "Barack Throws His Ailing Grandmother Under the Bus to Score Political

Points"

- Powerline: "Throw grandma under the bus"

- Rich Lowry: "The Throw Your Grandmother Under the Bus Speech"

- Fred Barnes: "What he did, was throw his grandmother under the bus."

Ah, but those are conservatives, you're surely saying. Hardly evidence of vehicular manslaughter, right? And that crowd probably already hates buses, just like they presumably detest light rail.

Then you need to check out the message board of Obama booster Oprah Winfrey.

If you're not moved to emotion by this comment: "Poor grandmother, I hope there's plenty of room under that bus, it's getting kinda crowded." Then surely this one will grab your heartstrings: "He threw his grandmother under the bus while trying to extract himself from under the wheels. What a pathetic grandson, that Obama."

And to think, those are the folks who scream and cry uncontrollably over a free car giveaway. Must be the mode of transportation.

Even Oprah couldn't save Obama's grandmother from the bus as its big wheels keep on rolling. So before we get out from under the bus, Gus, let's make a new plan and hope Obama's great-grandmother got better treatment.

Until then, we'll have to ponder this question asked at Yahoo! Answers: "Why did Obama throw his grandmother under the bus?"

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## Seatbelts

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

at least one large European-based tour company will not allow its customers to sit in the first or second rows of beltless coaches it charters. "Think of the message that sends," said Crow.

• Both Europe and Australia, which have long historical ties with Canada, have seatbelt requirements and standards.

In fact, European standards could serve as a model for Canada given that three of the four leading coach suppliers in Canada — Prevost, Van Hool and Setra, are European-owned or -affiliated companies. The fourth manufacturer, Motor Coach Industries, is based in the U.S., but has its largest plant in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Crow said all four coach builders, plus Canada's three largest coach operators (Pacific Western Transportation, Greyhound Canada and Coach Canada), are working with Motor Coach Canada on its initiative with Transport Canada.

In anticipation of the eventual development of seatbelt standards, Motor Coach Canada is researching provincial laws and regulations covering seatbelts and their use.

For example, Ontario has a law, designed for autos and vans, that makes the driver responsible for assuring that all passengers under the age 16 are wearing a seatbelt when the vehicle is moving.

The Ontario Motor Coach Association will attempt to get the requirement changed, making passengers responsible for wearing seatbelts.

From time to time during the past 30+ years, Transport Canada has considered the issue of seatbelts in motorcoaches. About 10 years ago, for example, the agency conducted an internal review of bus safety issues, which was expanded to include stakeholder consultations.

At the time, Transport Canada concluded that seatbelts "would be of potential benefit in only a very few cases. They would need management by bus operators and reliable use by passengers to achieve effectiveness. The benefit is too uncertain to impose seatbelts without a clear demand for a standard from the public and the motor carrier industry."

The agency went on to say that the cost of seatbelt installation is almost certainly a minor factor compared with the cost of a new bus. But it noted that the true cost of seatbelts also includes maintenance in good and clean operating condition, and a program to ensure proper use by passengers. "The last two require commitment by the operator supported by government enforcement."

## Carolina operators learn expensive lesson in Boston

BOSTON — A group of motorcoach operators from the Carolinas apparently learned a tough lesson here late last month at a national convention of teachers.

The teachers also may have gotten an education in bus chartering.

The operators from North and South Carolina, as well as other states, had brought their coaches to Boston to provide shuttle service

for the annual convention of the National Science Teachers Association at the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center.

Organizers of the event brought in buses from all over, including those from the Carolinas that traveled 800 to 1,200 miles, because they seemingly were cheaper than local bus companies.

Some of the operators appar-

ently sent their junkiest equipment. Wrong place to do that. Massachusetts has some of the toughest bus inspection agencies anywhere. After all, they've had to deal with cut-rate ethnic curbside operators for the past three years.

According to one report, bus inspections conducted the first couple of days of the convention produced 85 out-of-service items,

three towed coaches and fines from \$20,000 to \$40,000, depending on whose version you believe.

Bottom line: If you're going to send coaches 1,000 miles to provide shuttle service in a big-league city, you better know what you're getting into.

Or, more to the point, don't put unsafe coaches on the road — it can be very expensive.

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## Maine operators

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Under a law Maine adopted in 1980, there is a state use-tax exemption for vehicles, railroad rolling stock, aircraft and watercraft used in interstate or foreign commerce at least 80 percent of the time during the first two years after the equipment is purchased.

New motorcoaches that provide interstate bus service clearly are entitled to the exemption.

### Tax man cometh

However, Maine Revenue Services has recently taken the position that motorcoaches that pick up cruise ship passengers who come into Maine ports, primarily Bar Harbor and Portland, are not engaged in interstate commerce.

And, the bus tours conducted for cruise ship passengers do not count towards fulfilling the interstate use requirement that must be met to take advantage of the use-tax exemption.

Operators in Maine rely heavily on the use-tax exemption to help reduce the cost of purchasing new motorcoaches, which frequently

are used to service the cruise ship tours.

Penfold and other members of the operators' consortium, which is called the Maine Family Bus Group, say if Maine Revenue Services is successful with its effort to deny the use-tax exemption the impact will be devastating for both coach companies and tourism in Maine.

"First and foremost, Maine motorcoach companies would not be able to use their newest coaches to service the cruise ship passengers if doing so would prevent the operators from fulfilling the requirements for the use-tax exemption," says Penfold. "Thus, motorcoach operators would either be forced to send their newest coaches outside of Maine, or they would not have a need to purchase the high-end coaches that are used to service the cruise ship passengers."

### Looking elsewhere

"Without high-end coaches, the tour operators who contract the day trips on behalf of the cruise lines would not be inclined to hire Maine motorcoach operators but would

look outside of Maine for operators to conduct the tours," Penfold contends.

"Looking outside of Maine for buses would not only have a negative impact on Maine motorcoach operators but also would serve to make the tour more costly as the tour operators would need to pay more for out-of-state buses to defray costs of getting the coaches to Maine, assuming such out-of-state motorcoaches were available."

"With the added costs, the cruise lines would find stopping in Maine ports less desirable as a good portion of their marketing and income relies on the ability to offer interesting shore excursions," says Penfold.

Such a development, he contin-

ues, would put Canadian ports in a stronger competitive position.

"It's also worth noting that the cruise ships that come into Maine typically are made up of older passengers who are very interested in day trips and prefer to disembark while in port rather than stay aboard the ship to do other things. The lack of revenue from the cruise passengers would hurt local businesses that count on the passengers to spend money when they come into port," Penfold adds.

### Maine may lose out

"Our coalition believes this issue is important not only for its own interests but to the Maine tourism industry as a whole. In the event a cruise line decided not to

come to Maine due to the inability to provide diverse and interesting shore excursions, it is unlikely that the cruise line would return in the future."

Members of the Maine Family Bus Group are taking their message to the governor and carrying it to state legislators well.

It is the coalition's belief that the state law may be in conflict with federal laws covering interstate commerce. It has long been held by the motorcoach industry that land tours for cruise ship passengers are an extension of interstate commerce.

The issue could end up in federal court unless Maine authorities reverse their position and retain the use-tax exemption.

For the uninitiated, a use tax is a substitute for sales tax. Use taxes are typically imposed to minimize unfair competition between sales made in-state and those made out of state. The tax applies when sales tax has not been charged.

Members of the Maine Family Bus Group include eight coach operators, plus state and regional tourism executives, at least one state representative, and UMA.

## Coach stolen in New Jersey is recovered

SEACAUCUS, N.J. — A 2001 MCI D-model coach that was stolen from a motel parking lot here last month has been recovered. The bus is owned by Hagey Coach Inc. of Souderton, Pa.

The coach was found in the parking lot of another motel with the video monitors and spare tire

missing. There was no other damage.

Brian Hagey reports the thieves put 83 miles on the bus, including crossing the George Washington Bridge.

Anyone with information about the theft should contact the Secaucus Police Department at (201) 330-2060. The case number is 02565.



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# Affordable health insurance is goal of UMA program

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The United Motorcoach Association is partnering with Association Health Programs of Overland Park, Kan., to bring UMA members a program designed to reduce the cost of health insurance coverage.

The new program, available nationwide, includes health insurance, life insurance, long-term care insurance, cancer coverage, accident insurance, disability income, critical illness, dental insurance, vision coverage and other aspects.

"These benefits will allow UMA members to take advantage of better insurance coverage at the lowest possible rates," said UMA President and CEO Victor Parra. "This new, comprehensive health insurance program is for individuals, families, groups and businesses."

"Long-term care and life insurance also are being offered, with savings up to 40 percent below market rates, to UMA members

and associates, Parra added.

Association Health Programs, a nationally known company, has been retained to administer the program. Stuart Pase, president of Association Health Programs, said his company welcomes all UMA members to take advantage of the special benefits, protection, underwriting and pricing.

"UMA members will join other clients of Association Health Programs, which includes more than 130 associations with up to two million members over the past 17 years," said Pase.

UMA members that offer health coverage for their employees should take a moment to compare their existing plan to a plan that utilizes the UMA/Association Health Programs buying power, said Pase.

"All national 'A'-rated insurance companies are available. UMA members can receive enhanced benefits for themselves,

their families and their employees — both full and part time," he said.

"Programs are comprehensive and all inclusive, and include health saving accounts, co-pays, choice of deductibles, routine care and prescription drug coverage," Pace noted.

In addition to health insurance, UMA members between the ages of 45-75 also may be eligible for comprehensive long-term care insurance. All policies include home health care, assisted living and nursing home care.

"As life expectancy lengthens, people do not want to lose their assets, their freedom of living

environments, or become a burden to their family and friends. With

the proper funding now, you will have the money in the future to provide for very expensive services in your home and/or assisted living or nursing home care — at a time when financial ruin can take all your assets and choices away," said Pase.

UMA/Association Health Programs offers members access to every long-term care insurance company on a national basis with savings that cannot be obtained by yourself in the marketplace, according to Pase, noting that

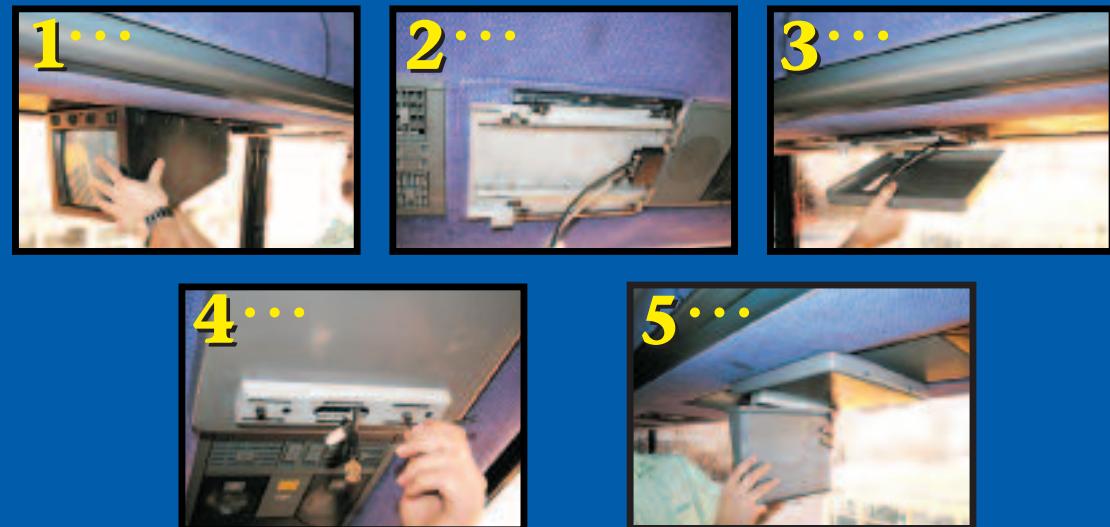
Medicare does not cover long-term care services.

UMA insurance programs include term life insurance, universal life insurance, whole life insurance, key person, and buy-sell insurance.

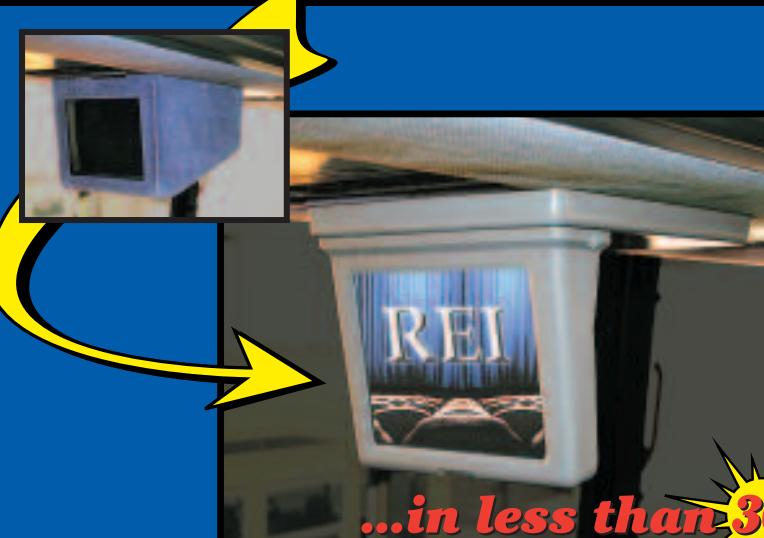
"People who smoke, have diabetes, are overweight or have other high-risk medical conditions can be helped many times with preferred rates," said Pase.

For more information, including a free evaluation of your current health and insurance benefits, call Association Health Programs at (913) 341-2868 or (888) 450-3040. Or, [www.uma.miquotes.com](http://www.uma.miquotes.com).

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## megabus

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

BoltBus, the Greyhound/Peter Pan operation, and megabus.com will attempt to distinguish themselves from the ethnic operators by offering more amenities, including movies; nicer and cleaner coaches; a track record of greater safety, and pricing. The \$1 starting price for seats on megabus.com and BoltBus is significantly less than the cheapest fare charged by the Chinatown operators.

"We believe we're putting a different, new product on the market that has a lot to offer," Greyhound spokesman Dustin Clark told one publication. In addition to Wi-Fi, BoltBus coaches also will have electrical outlets.

Passengers on the 22 daily megabus.com coaches between Boston and New York will be able to watch a movie shown on eight video screens in each bus.

The timing of the megabus.com expansion in the northeast was influenced in large measure by a noncompete agreement between its parent company, Coach USA, and Peter Pan Bus Lines. When Peter Pan purchased five Coach USA subsidiaries in the spring of 2003, the agreement reportedly prohibited Coach USA from directly competing with Peter Pan in the northeast for five years.

One operator that is monitoring the unfolding bus war closely, and could feel the impact on the New York-to-Boston segment, is LimoLiner, the luxury coach service operating between the two cities.

"We don't think it's going to affect us to a great degree. We have

a solid repeat-customer foundation that likes being treated civilly," Peter Pescatore, chief executive of LimoLiner told a Boston newspaper.

Technological amenities abound on LimoLiner coaches, which seat half as many passengers in leather two-by-one seating that sports seat-back entertainment systems.

Travelers pay \$89 a seat on LimoLiner and enjoy a meal, beverages and snacks served by an on-board attendant.

Both megabus.com and BoltBus will use the South Station bus terminal in Boston. BoltBus will use some of Greyhound's gates, while megabus.com is subcontracting with Dattco, which leases Gate 12. megabus.com reportedly plans to hire Dattco employees to drive Dattco buses to and from New York.

One megabus.com segment that will be interesting to watch will be the New York to Toronto run — a 10-hour trip.

megabus.com will be competing with local package tour companies that target mainly Chinese visitors and immigrants with cheap trips to the New York area for sightseeing and shopping.

At the same time, there's a price war brewing between Air Canada and upstart Porter Airlines on flights between Toronto and New York, with one-way fares to Newark's Liberty International Airport advertised for as little as \$95, plus fees and taxes.

Some Canadians seem to think it could be difficult to coax people to spend a day on a bus when they could spend an hour and a half on a plane without breaking the bank.

# When it comes to bus breakdowns, do you have a plan?

**By Dave Millhouser**  
ABC Companies

"Do you know anyone from Long Island?"

It was a strange question, and the guy on the other end of the line sounded like he was near tears. He had a bus load of students on the side of the road, out of fuel, and gasping in the summer heat.

My friend is a large, powerful, mustachioed man, so the weeping thing gave a sense of urgency.

One phone call did it. And the chairman of UMA's board of directors personally brought a replacement coach. He then fueled and primed my friend's bus, and swapped coaches with the charter later in the day. How's THAT for service?

Sadly, bus breakdowns don't always work out quite that well, but there are some things you can do that may help when you get into trouble.

A couple of years ago a Rensselaer, N.Y.-based operator snagged a lucrative contract to do coach tours of Nova Scotia. The two brothers who ran the company cleverly figured that, since Nova

Scotia is sparsely populated, and they hadn't operated coaches there before, a road trip was in order. They spent a week traveling and meeting folks who could help if something went wrong.

This is known as "preventative worrying," and it worked. The tours went perfectly. You may not have time for the road trip, but meeting other coach operators by telephone, e-mail, or at bus shows can help. People are far more willing to help someone they know, particularly at odd hours.

When the Bus Fairy attacks, you'll fair better if you have a plan. If you're on familiar turf, things usually work out fine. You, or your driver, know who to call. One of the things that makes the charter business "challenging" (I HATE that term) is that often you're not in friendly territory.

Your plan should include training drivers. Who, in your company should they call? How do you want them to handle passengers? When is it appropriate to leave the coach, as opposed to staying onboard? What repairs can a driver attempt? A bit of discussion now may prevent a bad decision

on the side of the road.

Generally, when you're in trouble, it's best to call another coach company. Clearly, if you need a replacement bus, they can help. The other side of the coin is that, even if they don't have the means to repair your coach, they can lead you to local resources that are bus friendly.

Repairing or towing coaches requires specialized skills and equipment that truck facilities may not have. A truck guy can make things lots worse if he tows, lifts or repairs your bus incorrectly.

You can tell your drivers that, when in trouble, "Bus" comes right after "Burglar" in the Yellow Pages.

When you do have to replace the coach, make sure you're dealing with someone compliant with all regulations. Your customer chartered from you, and if something happens, it's you that will be held responsible.

Make sure you know what the cost of replacing or repairing your bus will be. Sometimes invoices contain nasty surprises, so ask in advance. In ye olden days it could be difficult to get repairs done by

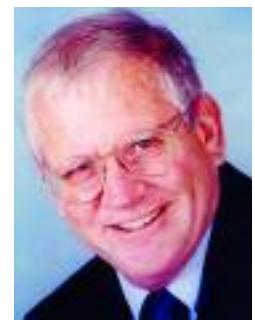
companies that didn't know you. Credit cards have helped solve this dilemma.

Some companies solicit emergency repair business, others do it only as a kindness. If you have a choice, use door number one.

If someone is kind enough to invoice you, pay them quickly. The new owners of a Syracuse, N.Y.-based coach company got in trouble, and were bailed out by a competitor on a Sunday. Monday morning they were waiting at their competitor's office with a check. That may be overkill, but it's fun, and cemented the relationship between the two firms.

Another local company is famous for not paying. They either delay or chisel. At the same time, when someone is in trouble near them, they pillage as much as they can. For them, the whole East Coast is a minefield...and every time they dispatch a charter, they have to give the driver a geography lesson. That's because, if the driver picks the wrong place for service, the coach will be chained to the wall until things settle up.

One of the great things about our industry is that it's small



Dave Millhouser

enough that relationships really count. If someone's in trouble near you, and you bail them out, they remember. If you won't come out, they remember.

You want to do all you can to have plenty in your account at the Karma Bank... because there are two kinds of bus companies, those that have broken down and those that will.

One thing we learned from the Long Island experience is... how to tell if a coach is out of fuel. Any time a driver says: "I can't be out of fuel"... he is.

*Dave Millhouser is a marketing consultant for ABC Companies. Contact him at: dave\_millhouser@hotmail.com.*

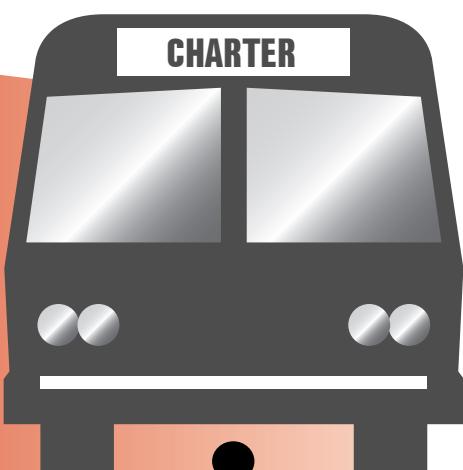
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## People

Veteran industry executive **John Oakman** has rejoined **Coach USA** as executive vice president for fleet maintenance and vehicle procurement. Most recently, Oakman was vice president of large key accounts at **ABC Companies**, where he managed relations with Coach USA and Coach America from ABC's Florida base. Oakman, who has nearly 40 years experience in the industry, joined ABC more than four years ago as vice president and general manager of ABC's southeast region. Before that he was vice president of vehicle procurement and sales at Coach USA. He also spent more than 18 years at Na-

**tional Coach Works**, serving as vice president of sales and later as president. He is based at Coach USA headquarters in Elizabeth, N.J.

Industry veteran **Bob Graf** has joined **Motor Coach Industries** as customer solutions manager. Graf formerly co-owned **El Camino Charter Lines** in California and brings more than 30 years of expe-

rience in operations and shop management to MCI. In the newly created position, Graf will be responsible for coordinating MCI Pro Support aftermarket services for targeted customers to help their operations grow profitably. He will report to **Larry Killingsworth**, MCI vice president of sales, and primarily support MCI's Western region

sales and fleet support teams. Graf began his career in 1976 as a unit repair supervisor for San Mateo County Transit. He and a partner purchased El Camino Charter Lines of South San Francisco in 1984. Over time, the business grew from four coaches to a fleet of 12. The company was sold three years ago but Graf stayed on.



John Oakman



Bob Graf

## Princess Tours

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

said Bruce Bustamante, Princess' vice president of community and public affairs.... "This new element gives students an additional benefit as they train to become Princess Tours driver-guides, and it further demonstrates our commitment to the excellence of this program."

During the past 15 years, the Princess Tours commercial driver training program has grown from a small program to a state-of-the-art school that includes a Web-based manual covering everything from vehicle inspection, to safe driving, to technical troubleshooting.

The training program is offered throughout Alaska, as well as in Rexburg, Idaho; Provo, Utah, and Bellingham, Wash. Classroom instruction for new drivers includes presentations and training videos all developed and produced by the Princess Tours' driver safety and training department.

"Achieving the ability to offer credit through the University of Alaska Fairbanks reinforces the strong reputation the Princess Tours commercial driver training program has established within the Alaska transportation community," said Bustamante.

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

## Priority One

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Priority One's motorcoach drivers.

At the same time, all Priority One motorcoaches will be retrofitted with passenger seatbelts to meet Wynne's safety policy of requiring all of its midsize buses to have seatbelts.

Wynne was started by Joan Wynne as a vehicle lease management company. She remains company president and CEO.

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## FTA Website

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

smaller number were expected to list the entire country as the area they would be willing to serve.

However, Griffio said many more operators than were expected have signed on to be notified whenever any type of charter work comes up, no matter where it is taking place or how far away it may be from an individual operator's home base.

"We have personally called more than 100 companies to discuss and assist them with changing their registration to states they originate from," he said.

**Unnecessarily burdensome?**

Griffo said signing up for the entire country unnecessarily increases the number of e-mails that transit agencies will have to send out each time they are interested in doing a charter that they first must offer to private carriers.

"There is a high likelihood that

no one will pay the deadhead fees associated with a bus traveling from New York to provide service solely within California," he noted.

Ken Presley, vice president of the United Motorcoach Association, defended the operators who have signed up to cover the entire country, noting that many motorcoach companies routinely move equipment long distances for large events such as national conventions and major sporting events.

However, he admitted the situation could create problems the FTA may have to address. "Much of the disagreements surround large events, however, and I suspect it will ultimately be necessary for the FTA to identify nationwide registration as 'special event' only," he said.

Griffo also pointed out a second problem that could negatively impact motorcoach operators waiting to hear about potential charters from transit agencies.

He said numerous operators have not listed a fax number for

their company with the registry, a mistake that could cause them to miss notification of a potential charter job. Fax numbers are important, he emphasized, because if a transit agency gets a non-delivery notice from an e-mail it has sent to an operator, it is required to send a second notice by fax.

Operators that have registered for the new systems should go back on the Website and verify they provided a fax number.

**Get with it**

Meanwhile, Presley is urging operators that have not yet done so to get on the charter notification list as soon as possible to be ready when the new rules take effect at the end of this month.

"It's beyond important," he said. "It is critical if private operators ever have a hope of preventing their local transits from intruding on their charter work," he stressed. "Also, if an operator is not registered, but his competitors are, then he has placed himself at a serious disadvantage as his competitors

**Calendar****APRIL 2008**

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

**30** National Interstate Corp. Annual Meeting, 3250 Interstate Dr., Richfield, Ohio. Info: Go to [www.nationalinterstate.com](http://www.nationalinterstate.com).

will likely have business opportunities he or she may never see."

He noted, too, that private operators may not complain about transit violations to the FTA if they are not registered.

**Spreading the word**

Presley said he was pleased with the number of operators that have registered so far, about 70 percent of whom are UMA members.

**JUNE 2008**

**17-20** Pennsylvania Bus Association 2008 Annual Meeting, Sheraton Atlantic City. Info: Go to [www.pabus.org](http://www.pabus.org), or call (717) 236-9042.

**24-26** National Tour Association Grassroots Symposium, Washington, D.C. Info: Go to [www.NTA.travel](http://www.NTA.travel).

**26-29** New England Bus Association Annual Meeting, Ledyard, Conn. Info: Go to [wwwnewenglandbus.org](http://wwwnewenglandbus.org).

UMA has made numerous presentations about the new charter service rules, including recent stops at the Virginia Bus Association operator's retreat in Lynchburg, Va., the annual Trailways Meeting and Conference in Los Angeles, and the South Central Motorcoach Association Operators Meeting in Houston.

"Two UMA partners, Trailways and IMG (International Motor Coach Group), have done an outstanding job in making sure their member operators are registered, too," he noted.

Presley pointed out that implementation of the rules is a result of substantial efforts by many individuals, including operators who volunteered and invested their time and money over the past six years.

"The new rules provide our industry an unprecedented opportunity to take our rightful place in our communities. With government resources rapidly diminishing, at the same time as passenger transportation opportunities, it is either the private industry stepping in to fill the needs and voids with our efficiencies or the transits will be all too happy to take the business. The stakes have never been higher," he said.

To help make the new process run smoothly, the FTA offers these suggestions to private operators:

- Respond only to jobs you are truly interested in taking.
- Do not send an e-mail negotiating the service with the transit agency. Instead, send the agency an e-mail saying you are interested in the business and then contact the customer directly to negotiate the terms.

• If you are not interested in a job, simply delete the e-mail you received from the transit agency.

• Double and triple check your information that is on the FTA Website. If you find an error, send an e-mail to [ombudsman.charter-service@dot.gov](mailto:ombudsman.charter-service@dot.gov).

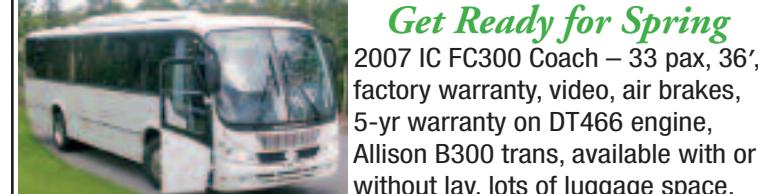
To reach the FTA Website, go to [www.fta.dot.gov](http://www.fta.dot.gov) and click on "Charter Registration Tool" on the right side of the page.

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