

# Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

## Are too many operators ignoring drug-alcohol rules?

### Smaller firms worry experts

Motorcoach operators who ignore federal drug and alcohol regulations for their drivers are headed for big trouble, warn industry experts.

Not only do such operators sub-

ject themselves to possible fines from safety enforcement officials, but they put their passengers at greater risk of being in an accident.

"Operators would be naïve to assume they can avoid utilizing the services of drivers without proper drug and alcohol screening and avoid a tragic accident," asserts Ken Presley, vice president of Service Insurance Agency.

Presley says passenger safety is compromised every time someone gets behind the wheel of a motorcoach owned by a company that is not abiding by the testing programs mandated by Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and the Federal Transit Administration.

Bob Crescenzo, vice president of safety for Lancer Insurance Co. and a national expert on drug and

alcohol compliance issues, agrees. Crescenzo says operators actually are "inviting" trouble when they ignore the rules.

"Is there a better place for a drug-addicted driver to find a job driving a motorcoach than an operator who ignores the regulations?" he asks.

Drug and alcohol rule violators and violations are on the increase,

reports Brad Watkins, project manager for Consolidated Safety Services and a recognized authority on safety and compliance issues.

A key reason for the rise, he suggests, is that too many operators are handing over their testing responsibilities to third-party administrators and then not following up to assure the testing company is

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## New coach sales climb during '05 first quarter

First-quarter sales of new motorcoaches in the U.S. and Canada were 42 percent higher this year than during the same three months last year, *National Bus Trader* magazine reports.

Coach manufacturers said they sold a total of 464 new coaches during the quarter ended March 31, up from 326 units during the like period a year ago. The 2005 number is the best first-quarter sales since 2002 when new-coach sales totaled 596.

Four models from three manufacturers accounted for 89 percent of seated-coach sales during the first quarter of this year. No. 1, again, was the J4500 from MCI; No. 2 was MCI's D4500; No. 3 was

the Van Hool 2045, and No. 4 was the Prevost H3-45.

Three other new-model coaches accounted for most of the remaining 11 percent of sales: the Setra S417, the MCI E4500 and the Prevost XLII.

Perhaps the most remarkable figure to emerge from the *National Bus Trader* report was the percentage of new coaches sold with ZF AS-Tronic transmissions during the first quarter of this year. Nearly 40 percent of all new coaches were spec'd with the ZF automatic stick-shift transmission.

But, as *National Bus Trader* Editor Larry Plachno noted in the report, no ZFs appear to have been installed in conversion shells sold



MCI's J4500 remains the No. 1 seller.

during the first quarter. That means the market share for the ZF among seated coaches was 48 percent during the initial three months of this year. A year ago, 4.3 percent of the coaches were delivered with ZFs.

Said Plachno: "Moving up to nearly half of the market in five quarters is noteworthy."

Plachno, who has been compiling and analyzing coach industry sales figures for 20 years, said there are five principal reasons for

the improved sales this year:

- Increasing orders from transit agencies and other government units, including a large order for MCI commuter coaches from New York City Transit
- The improving economy
- Substantial improvements in travel and tourism
- Some stabilization in the used-coach market
- Increasing gasoline prices

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## Greyhound sets lift installations with big award

DALLAS — Greyhound Lines has awarded what is believed to be the largest contract ever for retrofitting wheelchair lifts in motorcoaches.

*Bus & Motorcoach News* has confirmed that Greyhound awarded the contract — covering installation of 187 lifts — to Complete Coach Works of Riverside, Calif., the largest independent bus rebuilding and rehabilitation service on the West Coast.

Under the contract, Complete Coach Works will install Ricon cassette lifts in late-model MCI DL3s operated by Greyhound. The line-run company primarily uses 55-passenger DL3s on its long-haul corridors. The contract represents nearly 30 percent of the 660 DL3s in the Greyhound fleet.

One source put the total value of the retrofitting deal in the neighborhood of \$5.5 million. It is believed that Greyhound is purchasing some of the components to be used for the project and supplying them to Complete Coach Works for installation.

Greyhound declined to confirm

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## New rules boost prices of wheelchair lifts

WASHINGTON — The price of a wheelchair lift installed on a new motorcoach jumped by about \$1,500 last month following the implementation of new wheelchair-lift requirements mandated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

The regulations, which were to have taken effect last December, but were delayed four months

because of several requests for reconsideration that were filed with the federal agency, require lifts on new coaches to be equipped with handrails, retaining barriers and a threshold sound-and-sight warning alarm.

They also must meet minimum platform dimensions and maximum size limits for platform protrusions and gaps between the platform and

the vehicle floor or the ground.

Additionally, each lift has to undergo performance testing of more than 15,000 cycles — deploying the lift from a stowed position, lowering it to the ground, raising it to the floor position and then stowing it — before it can be accepted.

"They've raised the bar for us," said Don Newland, marketing manager of Ricon Corp., a leading

international wheelchair lift manufacturer based in Panorama, Calif.

He said the company, which switched its production lines to the new lifts in March, had pre-designed some of the upgrades into the lifts it had been making so it had to do very little to make the changeover.

The new regulations apply only

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## Experienced executive named LimoLiner CEO

BOSTON — LimoLiner, the luxury coach service operating between Boston and New York, has hired Peter J. Pescatore as chief executive. He will work closely with LimoLiner founder, Fergus McCann, to guide the company.

Prior to joining LimoLiner, Pescatore was president and CEO of TransNet, a door-to-door shuttle service operating to and from Logan International Airport in Boston. Before that, he was vice president of finance and CFO at Primedia Business Magazines & Media.

Pescatore said his goal will be to build the LimoLiner franchise into "the preferred choice for frequent travelers between Boston and New York. ... I'm eager to put my imprint on the company and work with Fergus to provide the consistent delivery of this unique travel opportunity to Boston and New York travelers."

Pescatore caught an early break with Amtrak's shutdown last month of its Acela Express trains in the northeast corridor. Amtrak's switch to slower trains boosted LimoLiner business by double-digit figures.

LimoLiner offers first-class service in 28-passenger coaches

between Boston and New York. It charges \$69 each way, a price the company said eight months ago it could not sustain but has.

Passengers can reserve seats on LimoLiner via the company Web site ([www.limoliner.com](http://www.limoliner.com)). Seats are selected by an "advanced seat selection" option.

The company offers three departures weekdays from Boston and New York, plus one departure from each city on Saturdays and two departures each on Sundays. The LimoLiner MCI E4500 custom coaches depart from the Hilton Boston Back Bay with a brief stop at the Sheraton Framingham Hotel and terminate at the Hilton Hotel New York in midtown Manhattan. The itinerary is reversed for the New York to Boston run.

LimoLiner is also now offering charter services. It advertises the cost of a full-day use of its coaches at "less than \$200 per person."

Pescatore has held a variety of executive positions, including being senior vice president and CFO at Vantage Group, a direct mail marketing firm that offered packaged tours to over-60 travelers. Earlier in



Peter J. Pescatore

his career, he was president of Fetco International, a giftware, photo frame and album manufacturer; vice president and CFO of Farberware Inc., a housewares and small electric appliances manufacturer, and general manager of MagMedia Inc., a floppy disk manufacturer.

Pescatore holds a master of business administration degree from Babson College.

"Peter's deep transportation industry experience and his broad management background make him a natural fit to lead LimoLiner in its second year of operation," said McCann, who owns the company and will continue as a director. "I ... know our passengers will benefit from his strong commitment to outstanding customer satisfaction, operational excellence and his appreciation of changing market needs."

## MTR Western sets rapid growth pace in Northwest

SEATTLE — One of the fastest growing motorcoach companies in the Pacific Northwest, MTR Western, is expanding into new markets, forcing it to delay plans for a large new operations center.

The Seattle-based operator is opening a 10-coach terminal this month in San Francisco and has just opened an 8-coach operation in Vancouver, British Columbia.

MTR Western was founded just over two years ago by Darren Berg, who owns a real estate holding company based in The Dalles, Ore. Berg has quickly grown MTR to a 50-coach operation.

Berg has built his thriving coach business in part by contracting with river cruise lines to provide sight-seeing day trips for passengers, as well as coach tours for Tauck World Discovery.

For example, it services two American West Steamboat Co. sternwheelers that operate between Astoria, Ore., and Lewiston, Idaho, on the Willamette, Columbia and Snake rivers. When the American West ships pull into port each day,

MTR coaches meet the passengers and take them on excursions to Mt. Saint Helens and other sights and activities.

It also is serving another river cruise line, Great American River Journeys, that is re-introducing the luxurious *Columbia Queen* stern-wheeler to the Columbia, Snake and Willamette rivers.

To handle the service, MTR is taking delivery of 12 2005 Prevost H3-45 coaches. Half of the company's all H3-Prevost fleet is new models.

Its coaches are spread between six locations. Besides San Francisco, Seattle, Vancouver and The Dalles, Ore., the company also has an operation in Calgary, Alberta, and Portland.

At the end of last year, MTR Western had expected to open a new 24,000-square-foot operations hub in Ridgefield, Wash., which is off Interstate 5 in the southwest corner of the state. The site is across the Columbia River from Portland.

The company sees Ridgefield

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# THE DOCKET

## Safety board blames fatigue in fatal '03 Louisiana crash

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The National Transportation Safety Board has determined that a fatigued driver who suffered from chronic insomnia probably caused the fatal crash 19 months ago of a church-owned motorcoach that slammed into the rear of a tractor-trailer near Tallulah, La.

The force of the impact shoved the big rig 62 feet along the shoulder of Interstate 20 and disintegrated the front of the coach.

Eight of the 14 passengers in the 1992 Neoplan were killed and the other six sustained serious injuries. The 66-year-old driver was injured but survived. A relief driver riding in the coach was killed.

Most of those onboard were members of the First Baptist

Church of Eldorado, Texas. They had been on the road for less than two hours the morning of Oct. 13, 2003, when the incident occurred.

The NTSB investigation pointed to two key factors that made the crash worse. One was that the force of the impact tore the passenger seats loose, collapsing them together like an accordion, crushing passengers and producing more severe injuries.

That aspect of the accident prompted the NTSB to ask the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to investigate the issue of seat fastener failures on coaches. It's likely there's a large number of the type of anchors found on the Neoplan on other coaches across North America. A

recall or fix would not be far-fetched.

The other significant factor is a distortion of the old saying about being at the wrong place at the wrong time. According to the NTSB, the truck that was hit only happened to be parked at the side of the road that day because its owner didn't maintain its vehicles. In other words, the truck driver had to pull over because his brakes were smoking because of "habitual and progressive mechanical neglect."

At the time of the crash, witnesses who were driving behind the coach told investigators the bus would speed up, slow down and drift from lane to lane. On two occasions before the crash, the coach almost struck vehicles as it



was drifting across lanes.

The driver was questioned by a sheriff's officer about 20 minutes after the crash. Still trapped in the wreckage, he told the officer he didn't know what had happened, that he must have either "nodded off" or fallen asleep.

In its report issued late last month, the NTSB had a number of strong recommendations for federal highway safety organizations, as well as Neoplan. It recommends that the:

- NHTSA develop performance

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## Transit agencies seek charter bus companies

The following public transit providers have informed the United Motorcoach Association of their intent to provide charter bus service unless willing and able private operators step forward to offer their services or to bid on contract opportunities. UMA urges appropriate operators to take the time to respond to these notices:

**Chico, Calif.** Deadline: May 3, 2005. Write to: Jon Clark, Executive Director, Butte Regional Transit, 965 Fir Street, Chico, CA 95928. Phone: (530) 879-2468.

**Claremont, N.H.** Deadline: May 9, 2005. Write to: Transportation Director, Community Alliance of Human Services Inc./Transportation Services, P.O. Box 689, Claremont, NH 03743-0689. Phone: (603) 863-0003.

**Conway, S.C.** Deadline: May 13, 2005. Write to: General Manager Myers Rollins, LYMO Wac-

camaw Regional Transportation Authority, 1418 Third Ave., Conway, SC 29526. Phone: (843) 488-0865.

**DuBois, Pa.** Deadline: May 13, 2005. Write to: Kristen L. Bojalad, Executive Director, DuFast Transit, 178 Spider Lake Rd., DeBois, PA 15801. Phone: (814) 371-3940.

**New Haven, Conn.** Deadline: May 13, 2005. Write to: Brenda Clark, Executive Assistant Special Services, Greater New Haven Transit District, 840 Sherman Ave., Hamden, CT 06514. Phone: (203) 288-6282.

**Harrisonburg, Va.** Deadline: May 23, 2005. Write to: Vickie Conley, City of Harrisonburg, Department of Public Transportation, 475 E. Washington St., Harrisonburg, VA 22802. Phone: Reggie Smith, director of public transportation, at (540) 432-0492.

## FMCSA simplifies registration

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has combined two of its Web sites to provide companies with more convenient access to agency information.

Users may now file for U.S. Department of Transportation reg-

istration numbers or operating authority registration, or update their registrations at one time, in one place.

The new registration process can be accessed on the web at [www.fmcsa.dot.gov](http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov). Click on "FMCSA Registration & Updates."

## ABA protests Air Force bus plan

WASHINGTON — The American Bus Association is protesting plans to use buses supplied by the public transit agency in Washington to shuttle visitors to and from Andrews Air Force Base for an open house next month.

According to the ABA, the Air Force is attempting to thwart federal charter service rules by using a sham contract with a Florida company called National Parking and Transportation.

Under provisions of the contract, National Parking and Transportation must subcontract directly with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)

for 300 buses — with licensed drivers — to provide the shuttle service on May 20-22.

The service will consist of round-trip runs from FedEx Field to Andrews AFB, and to and from the base to the Branch Avenue Metro Station.

"Your contract violates the letter and spirit of regulations" of the Federal Transit Administration, wrote ABA President and CEO Peter Pantuso. "The FTA charter bus regulations require that private bus companies be given the first opportunity for charter work, and only if there is no willing and able private operators may a public transit agency — such

as WMATA — be given the opportunity to assume the charter.

"Attempting to subvert the regulations by contracting with a private organization and mandating that it subcontract the work to a publicly funded transit agency is likewise (a violation) of the charter regulations," said Pantuso. "Similarly, attaching the condition that the subcontractor have access to a Metro station is also suspect as, to the best of our knowledge, only WMATA buses have such access."

Pantuso said it was ironic that a federal organization like the Air Force was being complicit in violating the rules of Congress.

## Report is dropped for large operators

WASHINGTON — A federal reporting requirement that only applied to the coach industry's largest carriers has been quietly dropped.

Under the reporting program, large operators were supposed to provide extensive financial and operational information to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Last August, the USDOT announced a change in which agencies would be responsible for collecting the information. Now it's eliminating the reporting requirement all together.

For the past decade, most motorcoach companies with annual revenue of \$5 million or more have been required to report balance sheet, income statement, mileage, number of employees, fleet equipment and other information to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics as part of its Motor Carrier Financial and Operating Statistics Program.

In September, as part of a revamping of the BTS, the responsibility for collecting the data was shifted to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

The publicly available informa-

tion was intended to be used by the DOT and other government agencies, motor carrier associations, insurance companies, consultants, law firms, academia, trade publications and others.

However, the reporting requirement may have been largely ignored. The data that was published on the DOT Web site generally covered only a dozen or so companies and was invariably at least three years old.

Plus, the penalties for not submitting the information had not been enforced.

# Highway safety agency probes key motorcoach issues

ALBUQUERQUE — The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, which sets and enforces safety performance standards for motor vehicles, has four investigations under way with long-term implications for the motorcoach industry.

The agency has set its sights on probing the

- Safety of stretch limousines
- Performance of wheelchair lifts
- Crashworthiness of motorcoaches
- Need for standards for re-treaded tires

In a presentation here last month at the Annual Conference of the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, Claude Harris, director of the NHTSA office of vehicle safety compliance, indicated his agency is particularly interested in digging into the safety of stretch limousines. That's because a loophole in federal regulations allows the longest limousines to largely escape regulations covering their construction and safety features.

The loophole exists because federal law generally limits the authority of the NHTSA to "new" vehicles; no used or remanufactured vehicles. And a Cadillac or Lincoln that's converted to a limousine is considered a used vehicle once it is sold and leaves a car dealer lot on its way to a limousine converter.

Last summer, the CVSA wrote to the NHTSA asking it to look into several safety-related aspects of stretch limousines. The CVSA expressed concern about limousine door latches, brakes, tires, suspensions, emergency egress, rearview side mirrors, weight and visibility.

Among specific safety issues that have been identified with limousines are passenger compartments with no inside door handles, severely restricting emergency egress; 32-foot stretch limousines with no intermediate side marker lights or reflectors, and limousines that are too heavy **empty** for the tires mounted on them. Or, limousines with brakes that have not been beefed up to handle a much heavier and longer vehicle, and side mirrors that are two-thirds the size they should be.

Harris said the safety performance of stretch limousines hasn't shown up on the NHSTA radar screen primarily because of the problem of identifying them in crash and accident reports. Frequently, they are identified simply as autos because the nameplate on the hood or trunk lid says Cadillac, Lincoln or some other car brand.

The upshot of the NHSTA probing could be a rulemaking that spells out safety standards for stretch limos like those that apply to new buses of every size and description.

The motorcoach crashworthiness research being conducted by

the NHSTA — in conjunction with Transport Canada — is focusing on the forces at work when a coach rolls over. Of particular interest are the forces applied to the roof and the windows and their supporting structure.

Coach manufacturers are work-

ing with the agency on the research which the NHTSA expects to publish in September of next year.

"Motorcoaches are generally very safe vehicles," said Harris. "We want to make them more crashworthy."

The wheelchair-lift research by

the NHTSA is aimed at monitoring the safety performance of lifts and looking for any defects not covered by new requirements that went into effect last month. (See related story on Page 1.)

Harris had one piece of good

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## Bus crash

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standards for passenger seat anchorages in coaches.

- Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration develop and distribute educational materials for non-traditional commercial vehicle owners, such as church groups, on how to comply with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations and develop a method for inspecting coach passenger seat mounting anchorages and revise federal safety regulations to require inspection of seat anchorages.

- American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators develop and disseminate language for state title and registration applications to alert applicants to the federal definition of a commercial vehicle and to the need to contact the FMCSA for guidance on obtaining a USDOT number and on determining the applicability of federal safety regulations to their vehicle.

- Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance revise the North American Standard Out-of-Service Criteria to provide guidance on inspecting and

examining tires to ensure they have the proper speed rating for a vehicle's intended use.

- Neoplan USA Corp. to include information in its owner and maintenance manuals that fully informs owners of the necessity of, and proper procedures for, checking passenger seat anchorage securement through routine inspections. And, the NTSB told Neoplan that until the NHTSA comes up with standards for passenger-seat anchorages, it should substantially increase the load capacity of passenger seat anchor systems in newly manufactured motorcoaches so the seats will not become detached during frontal impact collisions, side impact collisions, rear impact collisions and rollovers.

A synopsis of the report, including the findings, probable cause and safety recommendations, can be found on the "Publications" page of the NTSB Web site, [www.ntsb.gov](http://www.ntsb.gov).

The United Motorcoach Association was among those granted "party status" to the investigation by the NTSB, meaning it could participate in public hearings on the crash and question those individuals providing testimony.

## Bush wants flexible passport rules

WASHINGTON – It was one of those moments when Washington watchers shake their heads and mutter: 'What's going on here?' Or, 'Is anyone in charge?'

Within days of the U.S. departments of State and Homeland Security jointly announcing plans to require passports for everyone entering the United States, including U.S. citizens and Canadians, President Bush weighed in and seemed to say 'hold on a minute.'

The president said he was sur-

prised by the proposed rules. "When I first read that in the newspaper about the need to have passports, particularly today's crossings that take place, about a million for instance in the state of Texas, I said, 'What's going on here?'" Bush said when asked, at a meeting of newspaper editors, about the rules.

"I thought there was a better way to expedite the legal flow of traffic and people," he added.

The proposed passport rules

(see April 15 issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*), are designed to tighten U.S. borders against terrorists, but would hamper legal travel from Canada and Mexico.

Bush, who was governor of Texas before being elected president, said he has ordered a review of the rules. "If people have to have a passport, it's going to disrupt the honest flow of traffic. I think there's some flexibility in the law, and that's what we're checking out right now," he said.

## Safety issues

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

news for the coach industry. He said the agency is considering initiating a rulemaking to shorten stopping distances for large, over-the-road trucks. He said buses would be excluded from the rulemaking

## Wheelchair lifts

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

to new coaches and will affect older coaches only if the lift is replaced or retrofitted. Because manufacturers are now making only

— at least initially.

He presented figures showing that a loaded tractor-trailer rig driving at 60 mph needs 335 feet to stop. A motorcoach needs 280 feet or less, and passenger cars need 215 feet. Obviously, the differences in stopping distances make for huge highway safety problems,

lifts that comply with the new regulations, an operator would have to purchase one of the new models. However, it would not need to meet the new installation requirements that go into effect July 1.

The regulations (FMVSS No.

said Harris.

Retreads represent more than 60 percent of the tires used on commercial vehicles but they are not regulated by federal safety standards. The NHTSA is researching whether a rulemaking is warranted to establish new standards for recapped tires.

403 for the lifts and FMVSS No. 404 for the installation) also impact other buses, including paratransit and midsize buses, both of which increased the price of their lifts by less than \$1,000 because of the new regulations.

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## Challenges aplenty

A survey of operator members of the United Motorcoach Association shows that nearly two-thirds had improved revenue last year, but they continue to be challenged by a whole raft of issues — especially higher fuel prices and developing new customers.

The findings are contained in UMA's annual Industry Assessment Survey that was responded to by just over 30 percent of the association's 750 operator members.

The four-part survey measures the growth of UMA operators, along with the challenges they face, the markets they serve and other factors.

Of the 225 companies participating in the survey, 62 percent indicated their gross operating revenue increased last year from 2003. Revenue remained the same for 21 percent of respondents, and decreased for 17 percent.

At the same time, 46 percent of the companies reported feeling "more financially secure" last year than in 2003. Perceived financial security remained the same from the previous year for 33 percent of the responding companies, and 21 percent reported feeling less financially secure than they did in 2003.

"With a significant majority

reporting increased revenue and an even larger majority reporting increased or constant financial security, the outlook for the industry is positive," declared UMA President & CEO Victor Parra.

For last year, 48 percent of the companies reported purchasing vehicles. Of the companies making coach buys, an average of 5 vehicles was purchased, 83 percent of which were large coaches. Other vehicles purchased included mid-size buses, school buses and limousines.

Among operational challenges faced by UMA operator members, soaring fuel costs ranked No. 1, followed by driver recruitment, retention and training. Maintenance costs, and developing and executing a comprehensive business plan followed.

Among marketing challenges, operators said that reaching new customers was the No. 1 challenge, and developing a cost-effective marketing plan No. 2. Key legislative and regulatory challenges included understanding federal motor carrier safety regulations, understanding other government regulations, taking advantage of federal programs, and competition from transit agencies.

## 'Big Dig' project is sound

BOSTON — If Boston is on the itinerary of one of your coaches this spring or summer, the Federal Highway Administration has comforting words: The city's Central Artery Tunnel, or Big Dig, is safe despite all of the water leaks.

However, while the FHWA says the Big Dig project is structurally sound and safe for traffic, it also recommends that repairs continue to stop all of the leaks as soon as possible.

Additionally a report by the federal highway agency recommends that project authorities develop an inspection program to detect and deter any future leak problems.

The report was launched after leaks began showing up in the \$14.6 billion project and some motorists questioned the safety of the tunnels.

A follow up report will be issued later after additional inspections and repairs.

## Brake manufacturers give approval to plans for slack-adjuster warning

ALBUQUERQUE — A warning about the dangers of trying to manually adjust automatic slack adjusters has been proposed for inclusion in future commercial driver license manuals.

Brake industry manufacturers have agreed to proposed language for the warning that would be inserted in a new model CDL manual.

The language has been submitted to the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators, whose members publish state CDL manuals. Wider dissemination of the warning also is being considered.

The basis for the warning is that too many shade tree mechanics continue making manual adjustments to automatic slack adjusters, also known as automatic brake adjusters, when they discover the brake pushrod stroke extends beyond the legal adjustment limit.

At the Annual Conference of the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance here last month, Larry Yohe, a senior highway accident investigator for the NTSB, announced to the CVSA Passenger Carrier Committee that all slack adjuster manufacturers had agreed to the draft language for the warning that is to be submitted to the AAMVA.

Yohe emphasized that while today's slack adjusters adjust brakes automatically, they are not maintenance free and must be checked like other vehicle components. He emphasized that when a brake pushrod stroke is too long, and the brake is out of adjustment, it is wrong to manually adjust the adjuster without troubleshooting why it went out of adjustment in

the first place.

Yohe strongly recommends referring to the manufacturer's service manual whenever troubleshooting or servicing automatic brake adjusters.

Since Oct. 1994, all buses and other commercial vehicles equipped with airbrakes have been required to have automatic brake adjusters. The adjusters link the airbrake chamber to the service brakes, and adjust the brakes to compensate for wear of the brake lining.

Old-fashioned manual adjusters — that automatic adjusters replaced — had to be adjusted periodically by hand. But automatic adjusters adjust automatically while the vehicle is in operation.

The NTSB and others have found in their investigations that too many mechanics or drivers attempt to manually adjust their automatic adjusters. Frequently, they do this when they know a coach is going to be inspected or when it has failed an inspection and they're attempting to hurriedly get the vehicle back on the road.

The proposed warning says that in a vehicle equipped with automatic adjusters, when the pushrod stroke exceeds the legal brake adjustment limit, it is an indication that a mechanical problem exists either in the adjuster, or with the related foundation brake components, or the adjuster itself is improperly installed.

"The manual adjustment of an automatic adjuster to bring a brake pushrod stroke within legal limits is generally masking a mechanical problem and is not fixing it," says the warning. "Further, routine

adjustment of most automatic adjusters will likely result in premature wear of the adjuster itself. It is recommended that when brakes equipped with automatic adjusters are found to be out of adjustment, that the driver take the vehicle to a repair facility as soon as possible to have the problem corrected."

The warning concludes that the manual adjustment of an automatic adjuster should only be used as a temporary measure to correct the adjustment "in an emergency situation." It notes that such a temporary adjustment does not fix the problem and the brake will soon be back out of adjustment.

There was a brief discussion among CVSA Passenger Carrier Committee members about how quickly brakes will go back out of adjustment after a manual adjustment, but there was no quick consensus. Some said it only takes a few miles of driving, or a few applications of the brakes, while others said longer distances were usually required.

The problem of properly functioning automatic adjusters became an issue for NTSB consideration following an accident two years ago in Glen Rock, Pa. A runaway truck was involved in a multiple-vehicle accident, resulting in two deaths and several serious injuries.

The accident is expected to go before members of the NTSB in the next few months and other recommendations regarding automatic slack adjusters could develop from the meeting. The NTSB has investigated other accidents where brakes with automatic slack adjusters were either out of adjustment or simply not working.

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# IMG members adopt tough training program for drivers

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. — The International Motor Coach Group, which has long sought to set industry standards, is at it again.

The marketing organization, which limits its membership to 60 carriers and requires 100 percent approval by members before accepting a new company, has developed an extensive new driver training program that could again set the bar for other operators.

The 14-module program recently became required training for all IMG companies and they have 18 months in which to get their drivers through it.

“For each of them to come together and mandate it for their members is certainly a step forward,” said Steve Klika, president of the Overland Park-based group.

Most of the members are responding quickly, too, says Klika.

All but two have jumped right in and completed the train-the-

trainer aspect, and many have started training their drivers.

Klika said the program, put together by a safety committee and a private consultant, was developed as part of the organization's continuing effort to help its members remain among the best in the industry. Plus, he said, it would help assure consistency among members and benefit them by reducing insurance costs and accidents and their costly aftermath.

Under the program, drivers will be trained from the basics as if they were new drivers. They'll get classroom and road training in 14 critical areas, including federal regulations, equipment, safety procedures, special driving conditions, off-road handling, breakdowns, emergencies, customer service, security and driver health.

Some drivers will be allowed to grandfather in some of their past training, but they will have to pass

examinations before it will be accepted. Although still in its infancy, the program already is being expanded to include a driver certification procedure.

Drivers who pass the new training with an 80 percent grade or bet-

ter, and who meet strict performance and safety standards, will become IMG certified. “We're always looking for ways to promote our drivers and becoming certified is one way we can do that,” said Klika.

If successful, the program could go beyond the IMG.

“The IMG is always trying to set the bar for our industry and some of the things we do are eventually picked up by others, and this could be one of them,” Klika noted.



## New Peter Pan buses have fire suppression systems

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. — Peter Pan Bus Lines Inc. has purchased 16 new J4500 MCI coaches and equipped them with fire suppression systems.

“We think it's the best bus on the road today,” said company president Peter A. Picknelly.

Since the J-coach was introduced four years ago, Peter Pan has purchased a total of 65; the newest ones are the first to be equipped with Amerex fire suppression systems.

“The emphasis really has been to make the bus as safe as possible,” said Picknelly.

Peter Pan spent more than \$6.5 million for the 16 coaches, or \$425,000 each. The new buses will be used throughout Peter Pan's sys-

tem of scheduled route service in the northeastern U.S.

Peter Pan specs its J coaches with Series 60 Detroit Diesel engines with Jake Brakes, Allison B500 transmissions, National passenger and driver seats, REI A/V systems with six monitors, R.C.A. flooring, and Ricon S&S wheelchair lifts.

The Peter Pan coaches are the first J models MCI has produced with a factory-installed fire suppression system.

The coaches have a variety of other safety and security enhancements, said Christopher M. Crean, Peter Pan's director of safety. For example, the company is adding on-board vehicle recorders and cellular telephone systems.

## Wright Express adds online pay feature

SOUTH PORTLAND, Maine — Wright Express, a provider of payment processing services to the motorcoach industry, has added an online payment feature to its Web site, eliminating the need to mail checks.

It said the service would be

available to Wright's private label and co-brand partners, as well as fleets using the Wright Express Universal Card.

The electronic payment system uses encrypted bank account information to assure safety. Learn more at [www.wrightexpress.com](http://www.wrightexpress.com).

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## Drug testing

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

doing what it is supposed to do. "Many companies that attempt to administer drug and alcohol testing simply don't know the rules," says Watkins.

Many other operators — usually smaller companies — simply don't understand the rules or don't want to spend the money needed to comply with them, says Crescenzo. "Most small companies have never had a DOT audit, and consequently there is a lack of interest in complying with regulations," he adds. "Some operators simply avoid any services that cost money to implement.

The rules require that commercial vehicle drivers undergo a pre-employment drug test before being allowed to get behind the wheel of a motorcoach. If they test positive, they remain unqualified until they have been evaluated by a substance abuse professional, followed a treatment plan, and tested negative on a subsequent test.

The pre-employment testing applies to part-time drivers and

those who are used only sporadically. However, those who work for two companies need take only one pre-employment test.

In addition to the initial testing, drivers must submit themselves to random testing from a pool of drivers. The pool can include a group of drivers from the same company or a consortium of drivers from several companies.

"It is important to recognize that random selection means every driver has an equal chance of selection, and it is possible that a driver might be selected and tested more than once in the calendar years," said Crescenzo.

Special circumstances can cause special problems.

For example, drivers who work part time, but are not used for many months and are dropped from the random pool, are required by federal rules to take another pre-employment test before they can start driving again. "If the driver had remained in the random pool, even if he was not selected, he would have been qualified to drive (without the pre-employment test)," Crescenzo noted.

Additionally, the rules can be somewhat confusing because there are two sets of rules motor carriers need to be aware of — FMCSA rules found in Part 382 and FTA rules found in Part 655 and 2.

If a carrier operates a transit-type run that is funded in any manner by the federal government, it must follow FTA rules. If not, then FMCSA rules apply. Under the FTA rules, mechanics, dispatchers and supervisors may be considered as performing a safety-sensitive position and require drug testing. The FMCSA rules, however, require testing only for those who operate vehicles that require a commercial driver's license.

A consortium run by a third-party administrator probably is the best way for an operator to maintain a compliant drug-testing program, according to the experts.

However, the contracted administrator should be a full-service provider and offer services that include regular drug and alcohol testing, filing of regular reports on testing activities, updating of the random list, notification of random selections and development of an

annual summary report. Operators should monitor the performance of such a service if they use it.

"A consortium representative should be able to communicate with auditors, as necessary, to document the services provided to the operator," said Crescenzo.

The rules also require carriers to select a management person who is able to identify drivers who might be using drugs or alcohol, who then would have to take "reasonable suspicion" drug or alcohol tests. The "spotter" must take a two-hour training course that identifies the signs of drug and alcohol abuse.

The experts maintain that the key to being successful in following the rules is to know the rules.

"Work with local and national associations for support and information," offered Crescenzo. "Compliance is never easy, but it is always important."

Watkins said there is a great deal of information available from insurance companies, consultants and others and operators should take advantage of the learning tools available to them. "Ignorance is not bliss," he added.

## MTR

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

as a good location because it provides convenient access to both Portland International Airport and Columbia River waterfront docks.

Construction of the nearly \$3.7 million facility was delayed, however, first by city of Ridgefield review requirements and more recently by the demands of growing the business.

"We only have six in our management team, and currently we're slammed with other stuff," explained Berg. Still, he anticipates construction will begin this summer.

The new facility — on six acres — will centralize operations and maintenance, and replace a temporary location near Portland airport. The new building will not only serve as hub will also provide offices and a passenger terminal for the company's upscale clientele. Additionally, the complex will include a secured park-and-ride lot for customers who board coaches at the new terminal.

For more information about MTR, check out its slick Web site, [www.mtrwestern.com](http://www.mtrwestern.com).

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# Bus software vendors keep newest technology coming

The motorcoach industry landscape is pock-marked with operators who bought new technology that didn't quite work as advertised.

Yet, despite occasional set backs, information technology has become integral — and even critical — to the operations of motorcoach companies. They employ computer-based technology to support multiple functions, including dispatching, operations, maintenance, customer service, point of sale, payroll, finance, scheduling, Web sites, pricing and planning.

But in no area has such technology become more important than in managing charter and tour operations.

The industry is perhaps fortunate to have a small cadre of companies that appear dedicated and diligent in delivering tour and charter software that works, works as promised and works for years. They also strive to make what they've developed work better.

Here's a sampling of what coach industry software companies have been up while you've been focusing on getting the buses out the door each day.

## Norse Systems

The bus and motorcoach industry is probably not one that leaps to mind when one thinks of industries that are among the first to take advantage of new business-system technologies. But Norse

Systems reports customers are taking to a new internet-based technology.

The technology is called "virtual server." Virtual server is designed to replace the application server, commonly known as a multi-user computer, that companies frequently install in their offices. Instead of buying, installing and administering a local application server with a commercial database on it, with virtual server a company connects to a server that is managed for them in a specialized facility called a "host farm."

Host farms are specially built to house computers that rely on dependable, secure and high-speed internet connections. Many corporate Web servers live in host farms. These facilities generally have backup power systems, fire protection, site security, and clean, air-conditioned environments. More importantly they have redundant very high-speed internet connections.

The virtual server is custom configured for the bus company customer with an IBM database and a complete suite of bus-application software. The service includes back-up services, disaster recovery support, redundant hardware for reliability, and performance monitoring by system professionals.

The bus company connects directly to the virtual server through a proprietary new technology called a "gate-

way." All traffic to and from the server is fully encrypted and buffered. The virtual server has other advantages, including reduction in capital investment and eliminating the financial pressure that often accompanies new software implementation.

Says Norse Systems: "The internet: Its not just for Web pages anymore." Go to [www.norsesys.com](http://www.norsesys.com) to learn more.

## Paradigm Technology

To manage its diverse fleet, Tot-em Transportation Medicine Hat Ltd., one of western Canada's principal tour and destination bus operators, selected and implemented Distinctive Systems' Coach Manager software and Paradigm Technology Consulting's new transportation suite of products.

Paradigm Technology distributes Distinctive System's products and its transportation suite expands the capabilities of the Distinctive System product line by adding driver accounting and trip reporting, fuel tank and pump management, and business intelligence modules.

The transportation suite captures all the data recorded by drivers on charter, contract or internal trips, including accounting of driver advances and expenses, fuel purchases by state, daily mileage recorded by state and type of travel, and payroll information.

With the package of software, Tot-em will be able to manage all aspects of charter and contract bookings, handle all scheduled and unscheduled maintenance activities for its fleet, and streamline the driver- and trip-related accounting.

"Distinctive and Paradigm's solutions stood out as the obvious choice," said Terry Thom, director of information technology of Tot-em. "The range of features was very impressive, and included everything to meet our requirements and was the most practical solution given our desire for future growth.

"The fact that we went from nothing to everything in two weeks is a very positive testament to the PTC organization and the Distinctive Systems software," Thom added.

For information, contact Paradigm Technology at (866) 782-4636, or go to [www.busandcoachsystems.com](http://www.busandcoachsystems.com).

## Relational Bus Systems

RBS has expanded the applications for its motorcoach tour and charter management software by strengthening three key partnership alliances. In addition, the bus industry software maker has released a Windows- and Internet-based version of its tour reservations system and an updated version of its charter management system.

The expanded RBS partnership

arrangements are with:

Prophesy Transportation Solutions Inc. Prophesy Mileage Routing Sub-system now integrates with RBS GoChart2000 to calculate mileage-based costing and print driving instructions. Prophesy also integrates with RBS GoMile3000 to estimate IFTA mileage and provide other information.

Ron Turley Associates. GoChart-2000 customers who also use the Ron Turley Associates' fleet maintenance software can get additional reports that assist in maintenance scheduling, plus learn actual costs per mile for fuel and maintenance for each vehicle to track charter profitability.

MRK Technology Services. MRK is offering a hosted option for all RBS charter modules, allowing connection to the system from anywhere via the Internet.

GoTour Online is RBS new browser-based tour reservations system. It handles both group and individually seated retail tours. Customers' tour systems are hosted on RBS' secure servers and accessed via the Internet.

RBS has released version 14 of its GoChart2000. The latest version of its charter management system has more than 50 database updates and report additions.

Go to [www.rbs2000.com](http://www.rbs2000.com) to learn more.



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## Arrow Stage Lines Phoenix

Arrow Stage Lines has taken delivery of seven new Prevost H-series coaches, boosting the company fleet to 78 coaches and making it the largest operator of Prevost coaches west of the Mississippi River. The new coaches will be used on long-distance tours.

"After careful consideration, we determined the Prevost H-series coach best suited the needs of our customers," said Ron Waller, general manager of Arrow. "Also, the buses are well liked by our drivers, the maintenance staff and the sales department."

In the past year, Arrow has updated its fleet with 11 other new coaches, adding four new Van Hool

T2145s, five Prevost XLIIIs, one ABC M1000 and one Mercedes Sprinter.

The company also has adopted a new logo and graphics for many of its buses. The new logo is designed to help Arrow both maintain the local, "family image" of the company, that has been around for 65 years, and leverage the relationship with its parent company, CUSA LLC, the nation's largest tour and charter motorcoach operator.

"We are very proud of the Arrow Stage Lines history and tradition. This new design carries on the reputation of Arrow Stage Lines being a market leader and innovator," said Waller.

Arrow Stage Lines, which operates Gray Line Tours of Phoenix, is also the largest motorcoach company in Arizona. It offers tours across North America and caters to groups from Europe. It is licensed to operate in nearby Mexico.

Arrow intends to use its new Prevost H-models — four 45-footers and three 41-footers for long-distance tours. It has equipped them with Detroit Diesel Series 60 engines, ZF AS-Tronic transmissions, Alcoa wheels, Firestone tires, REI A/V systems with six flat-panel monitors, American passenger seats, Isringhausen driver seats, and Tarabus flooring. Two of the H3-45s are lift-ready coaches.



## Escot Bus Lines upgrades fleet, makes staff changes

ORLANDO — Escot Bus Lines of Largo, Fla., has upgraded its fleet to help keep pace with its expansion a year ago into the Orlando market.

Company president Brian Scott said that a fifth Van Hool motorcoach has been added in Orlando where manager Beau Langford is excited about the success thus far, and sees further expansion.

Helping fuel the growth has been the addition of Carol Meehan as a fulltime sales representative. Meehan has a number of years of industry sales experience and not only works the Orlando market but also Tampa Bay.

Escot's Tampa Bay/Largo operation has promoted Marty Andujar

to the position of safety/training manager, and Debra Skaggs to assistant operations manager. Also joining the Escot Tampa Bay team in a sales/operations capacity is Rachel Campailla.

In recent weeks, Escot has taken delivery of two new Van Hool T2145 model coaches. The coaches are equipped with Detroit Diesel Series 60 engines, ZF AS-Tronic transmissions, Amaya passenger seats, Alcoa wheel, Firestone tires, REI A/V systems and Isringhausen driver seats.

Escot is a member of the International Motor Coach Group, and Brian Scott is vice chairman of the United Motorcoach Association.



Walter Hubbard of Kingsmen stands next to new coach.

## Kingsmen Coach Lines Conley, Ga.

Kingsmen Coach Lines has taken delivery of two 2005 Van Hool C2045 coaches. Kingsmen is a full-service charter company that transports groups throughout the United States.

Company president Walter Hubbard takes pride in offering first-class service to his customers and providing them with late-model coaches, equipped with all the amenities necessary for a comfortable trip.

Kingsmen's two Van Hool C2045s are equipped with Detroit Diesel Series 60 engines, Allison B500 transmissions, Jake Brakes, Amaya Guadi passenger seats with footrests, Isringhausen driver seats, restrooms with flush type Monogram toilets, REI A/V systems with four color monitors, in-dash CD players and Goodyear tires.

Hubbard is president of the Georgia Motorcoach Operators Association.

## VIP Tour & Charter Portland, Maine

When the time came to add a fifth 45-foot motorcoach to VIP Tours' fleet, the choice was easy for company founder and general manager Ray Penfold. He wanted another Prevost XLII.

"Customers love the windows," he says. "They really give you a great view of the scenery. And, travelers also enjoy the comfortable ride," adds Penfold, who seemingly can't say enough positive things about Prevost.

"The Prevost people really know how to build motorcoaches," he says. You can drive them in almost any weather conditions, all over North America, from Texas to Alaska. They are great vehicles that stand the test of time. With Prevost you know you will be taken care of."

Penfold established VIP Tours in 1985, making this year its 20th anniversary. While the company specializes in tours and charters in the U.S. and Canada, it also



operates daily casino runs to Foxwoods in Connecticut, and provides contract services to area colleges.

The company's diversified fleet includes both motorcoaches and midsize buses, with seating capacities ranging from 16 to 55.

Penfold spec'd his XLII with a Detroit Diesel Series 60 engine; Allison B500 transmission; Jake Brake; Prevost Turismo II passenger seats; REI A/V system with four monitors, and DVD and VCR players; Isringhausen driver seat, Goodyear tires, Webasto auxiliary heater, Goodyear tires and Prevost's exclusive interchangeable wheelchair-lift system with a Ricon lift.

## Strathcona County Transit Sherwood Park, Alberta

Strathcona County Transit has added three new Nova LFS low-floor buses for Sherwood Park service and commuter runs to Edmonton, Alberta.

Nova Bus broke-in the 40-foot LFSs for Strathcona Transit by driving them the 2,500 miles, or 4,000 kilometers, from the Nova plant in Quebec to Alberta. "That clearly shows the commitment they have to customer service," said Lynn Kelly, transit manager.

The buses are equipped with Cummins ISL engines, antilock braking, multiplexed electrical systems, LED marker lights and tilt-and-telescoping steering wheels.

Before ordering the buses, Strathcona ran a LFS demonstrator for two weeks and then surveyed passengers. "The research showed passengers liked the sleek styling of the bus and its accessibility," said Kelly.

## Can opulence attract more riders?

SCHAUMBERG, Ill. — According to an article in *The Wall Street Journal*, an increasing number of middle-class Americans are adopting upscale tastes.

Instead of buying Chevys and Fords, these middle Americans with a penchant for luxury are opting for Lexus and Volvos. Instead of purchasing \$300 Samsung's to watch *Law and Order*, they're slapping down their MasterCards and paying \$4,500 for Sony flat-panel TVs.

Marketing specialists call this practice "the mainstreaming of affluent tastes."

Motor Coach Industries appears to have taken note of the trend and is testing whether an upscale motorcoach might make bus riders out of a goodly number of these good-life connoisseurs.

MCI has developed a custom version of its top-of-the-line E4500 coach and outfitted it with amenities and options that heretofore have largely been confined to executive conversion coaches.

"By offering the E4500 LX, we believe we're offering the all-out opulence many of our customers seek," said Tom Sorrells, MCI pres-

ident and CEO. "We think certain operators will find it of great value and a competitive advantage."

While the exterior of the coach features custom paint and graphics, plus stainless-steel trim, it is the interior that sets the LX apart.

The cabin features both a seating area and a lounge. Only 42 seats have been installed, instead of the traditional 56, giving a strong feeling of spaciousness and luxury. The saddle-toned leather Amaya seats, with brown piping, have footrests, pull-down trays and cup holders. Even the window-release handles are covered in leather.

Plus, there are leather and granite accents along the coach's spiral entry. The earth tones used throughout the coach were chosen to give the feel of understated elegance.

Six flat-screen LCD monitors and individual eight-channel audio add to the creature comforts.

Mid-cabin, the coach opens up to a lounge area featuring dual conference tables and a rear galley with Euro-style cabinets and solid-surface counters.

Other custom touches include AC power for laptops, lockable par-

cel racks for extra security, and a lavatory that has been upgraded.

MCI is offering the E4500 LX in conjunction with conversion specialist Amadas Coach. The price lists above \$500,000.

MCI currently is touring the coach around the U.S., along with the newly restyled D4505. Both coaches will be at the Dallas MCI Sales and Fleet Support Center on May 3; the Des Plaines, Ill., sales center on May 10; the Los Alamitos, Calif., sales center on May 17. The open houses are from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.



A custom interior distinguishes the MCI E4500 LX.

## Greyhound

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the deal, saying only that it has a policy against releasing "details of purchase orders or contracts — placed or speculative — to the public."

Complete Coach Works would only confirm that it had been chosen by Greyhound as a preferred supplier for the project.

"Greyhound Lines was looking for a supplier with a proven track record for quality installations and on-time performance," said Macy Neshati, vice president of sales and marketing for Complete Coach Works. "We are very proud our company met their exacting standards."

Sources said the retrofitting will begin at the end of June and continue at a rate of one per day until all 187 buses are completed. In addition to Ricon lifts, Greyhound reportedly has spec'd new sliding flip-up Amaya seats, giving each retrofitted coach two wheelchair positions.

One source indicated that contract extensions covering more buses were possible. Another industry executive said he thought Greyhound was considering awarding contracts to other suppliers because of the deadline the carrier faces in complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Greyhound has 18 months to have one-half of its fleet wheelchair-lift

compliant.

The company declines to provide figures on how many buses it must retrofit or replace with units that have lifts. Greyhound currently has a fleet of just under 2,000 coaches. Of that number, 280 are MCI G4500 models that have lifts. In documents filed with the Securities & Exchange Commission, Greyhound's parent company, Laidlaw, reported late last year that 18 percent of its buses used in fixed-route service were lift equipped. That could mean that, at most, Greyhound has 360 coaches with lifts, leaving 600-650 that would need to be retrofitted by October 2006, the ADA deadline.

In the past, Greyhound has prided itself on meeting ADA deadlines and it says it intends to continue doing so. "Greyhound has always been in full compliance with the Americans with Disability Act and will remain in compliance going forward," company spokeswoman Kim Plaskett told *Bus & Motorcoach News*.

Part of the cost of the retrofitting will be paid by federal grants. Each year, for the past six years, the Federal Transit Administration has awarded grants for wheelchair-lift installations in over-the-road buses. Greyhound typically gets 35-40 percent of the grants. Last year it was awarded \$2.6 million, or roughly 38 percent of the total.

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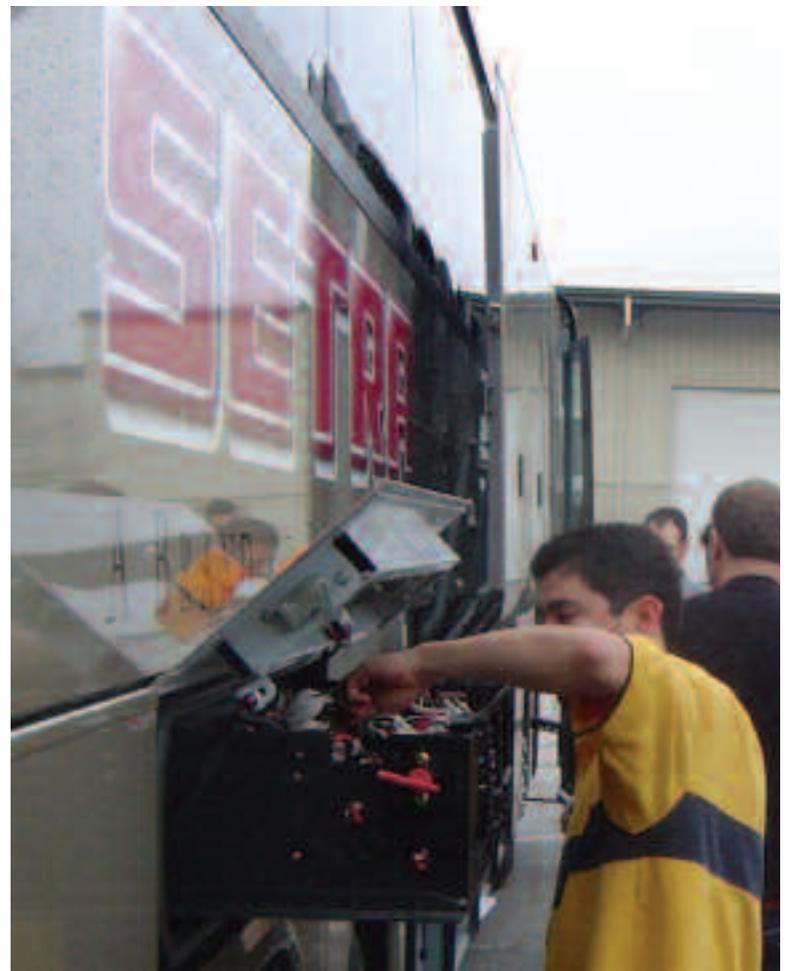
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## Technicians get hands-on lessons at Setra Center

Setra CoachWorld in Winter Garden, Fla., was the site for a recent service training session conducted by Setra of North America. The hands-on program, designed for both technicians and drivers, focused on advanced HVAC and electrical systems for the Setra S 417. The next Setra training session will be Aug. 8-12 at company headquarters in Greensboro, N.C., and will cover advanced suspension and pneumatics, including brakes and ABS. In the photo at right, Jorge Borrayo of the University of Maryland works with S 417 electrical components.



## Bill aims to help small business

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Senate is considering a bill designed to make it easier for small businesses to comply with complex and confusing federal regulations.

The Small Business Compliance Assistance Enhancement Act of 2005 would amend the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act, a 1996 law that bolsters the U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy's ability to reduce regulatory barriers that can stifle entrepreneurial growth.

The new bill was introduced by Sen. Olympia Snowe, R-Maine, and is supported by the United Motorcoach Association.

Among other things, the bill will place new emphasis on compliance guides that agencies are required to write so small businesses can better understand federal rules and regulations.

It also requires agencies to report annually on their efforts to

comply with the law.

"Senator Snowe's bill helps ensure that federal agencies issue compliance guides that are helpful for the small business community," said Thomas M. Sullivan, SBA chief counsel for advocacy. "The bill recognizes that small businesses often need compliance help before new rules go into effect."

The bill implements one part of the Office of Advocacy's four-point legislative agenda for the 109th Congress. The legislative priorities are designed to give small businesses a greater voice in the federal regulatory process by using a targeted approach to provide relief.

To implement the remaining three points of the agenda, the Office of Advocacy believes Congress should amend the Regulatory Flexibility Act so:

Federal agencies are required to review all 10-year-old regulations for their impact on small business.

This would encourage agencies to update their rules, assuring regulatory protections reflect current conditions.

Executive Order 13272 is codified into law. This will ensure independent agencies comply with the RFA and all federal agencies consider advocacy's comments on behalf of small business when they issue final rules.

When federal regulations must be implemented by the states, agencies will analyze the impact of those rules on small entities. Moreover, they should provide states with regulatory alternatives that will enable them to meet federal requirements while minimizing their impact on small entities.

The Office of Advocacy independently represents the views of small business to federal agencies, Congress, and the president. For more information, go to [www.sba.gov/advo](http://www.sba.gov/advo).

## Coach sales

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"Although these figures are obviously optimistic, I would discourage anyone from running out and building another bus manufacturing plant," said Plachno, tongue firmly planted in cheek. He noted that while it appears new-coach orders are increasing from private operators, he doesn't foresee a scenario that would produce the kind of boom coach manufacturers enjoyed in the late 1990s when

sales leaped off the charts.

Just over 82 percent of the new coaches sold during the first quarter of this year were seated models, leaving about 18 percent manufactured as shells destined to become conversion units. The number of conversion shells delivered during the first quarter this year rose to 83, from the 70 sold a year ago, but the market share for conversion coaches dropped 3 percentage points from last year.

The percentage of new coaches purchased by Canadian operators

declined in the first quarter of this year. Canadian companies bought 6.5 percent of the 464 sold in the first quarter, meaning U.S. operators purchased 93.5 percent. A year ago, Canadian operators purchased 8.6 percent.

Sales of 40- and 41-foot coaches continue to be lackluster, accounting for only 3 percent of the total.

Questions about *National Bus Trader's* quarterly and annual sales reports should be directed to Larry Plachno at (815) 946-2341, or e-mail [lplachno@busmag.com](mailto:lplachno@busmag.com).

SCHAUMBURG, Ill. — Motor Coach Industries has reorganized its southern new and used coach sales territories, including naming two new-coach regional sales managers.

Roy Furo joins MCI as regional sales manager responsible for New England and eastern New York, while Glen Collins joins the company as regional sales manager for Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama and Arkansas.

Both Furo and Collins previously were employed by Ryder System Inc. They will report to Pete Cotter, MCI senior vice president of coach sales.

Rob Lessor, who previously was regional sales manager for the territories taken over by Collins, will now be responsible for new-coach accounts in Texas and Oklahoma, plus retaining Mississippi and Louisiana as part of his territory.

Brian Hill, who was responsible

for new-coach sales in Texas and Oklahoma, has moved to the pre-owned coach division and will continue to serve Texas, Oklahoma and Louisiana.

Furo succeeds Mitch Guralnick, who has moved to pre-owned coach sales where he will assist in expanding MCI's pre-owned coach market presence.

"We're very pleased to announce these new appointments and changes," said Cotter. "Both

Roy and Glen know the business demands of their territories very well and bring strong skills in sales and service to their new-coach sales positions."

Furo had a 14-year career with Ryder, where he was general manager of the company's Albany, N.Y., district for the past four years. He holds a bachelor degree in marketing from Oswego (N.Y.) University.

Collins was a vehicle sales manager in Knoxville, Tenn., for



Roy Furo

Glen Collins

Ryder for the past four years. He is a graduate of the University of Tennessee.

## Coach operators support R.I. tour

WARWICK, R.I. — Rhode Island motorcoach operators are lending their support to a statewide event this month designed to encourage Rhode Islanders to visit and explore their state.

The second annual *Tour Rhode Island, There's No Place Like Home* event will be Saturday, May 7.

At least 20 coaches will carry more than 1,000 people on 20 different tours throughout the state. It is being billed as the "largest public motorcoach tour" in state history.

Among those participating will be Viking Tours of Newport, a bus charter and tour operator. Company President Karen Oakley said last year's inaugural *Tour Rhode Island* was "extremely successful. It pretty much sold out." Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$15 for children 12 and under.

Oakley said the tour provides good visibility for coach operators and "lets residents know what's here."

## TCF Leasing Inc. changes its name

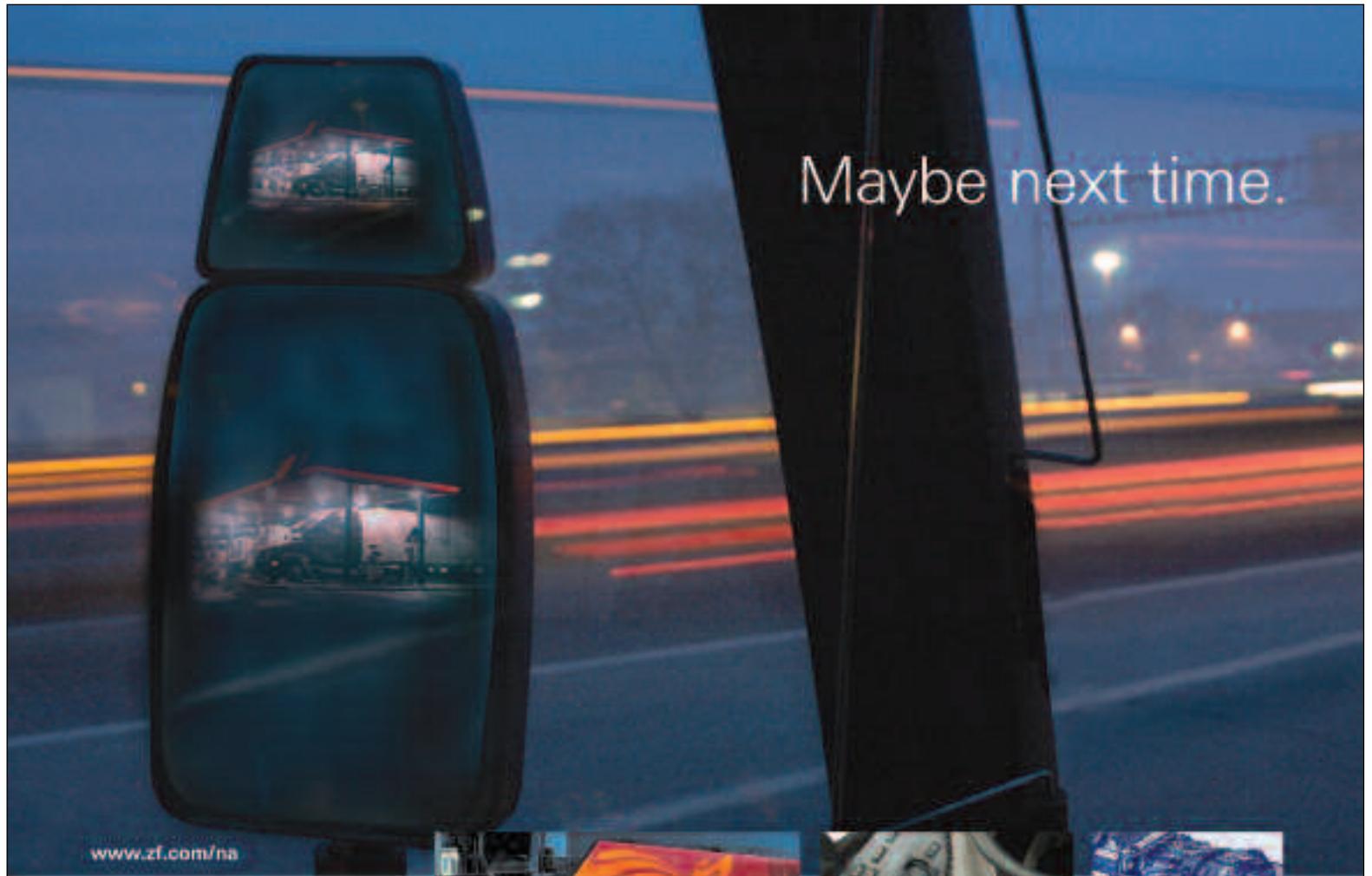
MINNETONKA, Minn. — TCF Leasing Inc., which has become an important coach industry lender, has changed its name to TCF Equipment Finance Inc.

TCF Express Leasing, a trade name for TCF Leasing, will also begin operating as TCF Equipment Finance.

TCF Equipment Finance provides a variety of equipment financing for a wide range of target industries, including coaches, tow trucks, tire service trucks, and shuttle buses.

The TCF family of equipment finance companies has experienced a 245 percent increase in total portfolio size since 1998. During 2004, the portfolio increased 18.5 percent to \$1.4 billion.

TCF Equipment Finance is a subsidiary of TCF National Bank, which is a subsidiary of TCF Financial Corp., a Minnesota-based national financial holding company with \$12.3 billion in assets. TCF has 430 banking offices in Minnesota, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Colorado and Indiana.



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