

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

New rules are no surprise to public transit agencies

Note: As public transit agencies across the U.S. begin implementing the new charter service rules on April 30, the sort of thing that's occurring in Eugene, Ore., could be repeated elsewhere.

Lane Transit District, the transit agency in Eugene, apparently has been providing illegal charters for years and sandbagging private operators to get away with it. Now it's complaining it will no longer be able to provide the charters and disingenuously telling the public it was blindsided by the new rules.

Darren Berg, CEO of the MTR Group, which owns OC&W Coachways of Eugene, wrote the following opinion piece for the Eugene newspaper. Other operators might want to hold onto the article. It could come in handy when your local transit agency starts making the same noises.

By Darren Berg

There has been a lot of conversation and press coverage over the past few days regarding the new rules from the Federal Transit Administration that are slated to go into effect April 30, specifically regarding the effect those new rules will have on the Lane Transit District's ability to provide private charter service to events such as the U.S. Olympic Track & Field Trials.

Problem is, all of the previous conversation and press coverage suggests that these "new" rules pose a threat to LTD's private charter operations — a threat that didn't previously exist. That's factually incorrect. Worse yet, the suggestion that LTD has somehow been blindsided by these new rules ignores the reality of how new rules come to be.

Regarding the point of creating

a threat that didn't previously exist, let's forget about the new rules for a moment: The shuttle program LTD proposes to provide for the Olympic Trials was (is) prohibited under the old FTA rules, too (see 49 CFR 604.11 "procedures for determining if there are any willing and able private charter operators").

Those old rules are surprisingly clear and understandable, requiring that a federally funded transit agency formally determine whether a willing and able private charter operator exists before providing private charter services that extend beyond its stated mission of operating a fixed-route transit system that collects fares from its passengers.

In its defense, LTD will point to the "annual notifications" it sent to the private sector as evidence that it complied with the FTA's old rules by seeking out willing-and-able private charter operators. But historically, LTD's notifications always have been nothing more than a lame attempt to comply with the old rules, never providing the private sector with the event-specific, detailed and timely information the private sector would need in order to gauge its capabilities and interest.

So the question back to LTD from the private sector has always been: Willing and able for what? LTD has never answered that question.

As a direct result, LTD always has found there were no willing-and-able private charter operators interested in the private charter



Darren Berg

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Industry safety record marks time

The safety performance of the bus and motorcoach industry appears to be stuck in neutral, the latest figures from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration suggest.

There were 299 fatal crashes involving buses in 2006, continuing a five-year upward trend, the NHTSA figures show. A total of 331 people died in those crashes, the same number killed five years ago when there were 274 bus crashes.

The number of nonfatal bus

crashes in the U.S. has risen in recent years. In 2006, there were 10,938 nonfatal bus crashes, up from 10,552 in 2005 and 8,882 in 2004.

Of the nearly 11,000 nonfatal crashes in '06, 6,142 produced injuries to 14,467 passengers, drivers and others. Nearly 4,800 of the crashes were severe enough to require the coach to be towed away.

During the same period, the number of fatal crashes involving over-the-road trucks declined despite big increases in the num-

ber of registered trucks.

A total of 4,995 people died in 4,732 large truck-involved crashes in 2006, down from 5,235 deaths in 2005 in 4,951 large-truck crashes.

In the airline industry, there were two major accidents in 2006, resulting in 47 deaths. There were 18 airline passenger deaths in 2005 and 11 in 2004.

And for the second time in two decades, there were no airline passenger deaths or major accidents last year.

MCI deliveries rise, credit rating cut

SCHAUMBURG, Ill. — Motor Coach Industries has announced a big jump in first-quarter coach deliveries.

The sales announcement came just days after Standard & Poor's lowered MCI's credit rating.

MCI said it delivered more than 300 coaches, both new and used, during this year's first quarter, an increase of 17 percent over the first quarter of 2007.

MCI attributed "the strong first-quarter sales surge" to a variety of factors, including customers "experiencing increased demand

for motorcoach travel in key markets and taking advantage of current economic stimulus programs such as bonus depreciation."

Larry Killingsworth, MCI vice president of sales, said the results "can also be attributed to our advance engineering work and testing done to ensure that the EPA-compliant 2007 engines performed for our customers in all market segments.

"And, operators tell us they are experiencing ridership increases, especially as the rising cost of gas influences commuters and travelers

to seek more affordable modes of transportation. Some operators have also said they plan to take advantage of bonus depreciation offered this year," Killingsworth noted.

Another contributing factor, cited by MCI, was its customer support efforts.

Although it was not mentioned by MCI, the company also ran aggressive inventory clearance sales during the quarter, as well as promoting the ready availability of in-stock new coaches.

Mitch Guralnick, head of pre-

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Dean Carson dies in plane crash

BIG BEAR LAKE, Calif. — Dean Carson, a popular and respected West Coast bus industry executive, was killed last month when the light airplane he was piloting crashed as he was nearing the end of his daily flight home.

Mr. Carson, who would have turned 53 in June, was president of Transit Sales International, largest seller of used transit buses in North America, and Shuttle Bus Leasing, which specializes in short- and medium-term bus leases.

For the past decade, Mr. Carson and his brother, Dale, had

been business partners, developing and growing three Riverside, Calif.-based companies — Transit Sales, Shuttle Bus Leasing and Complete Coach Works.

Last year they took a giant leap and purchased the Blue Bird Coachworks and Blue Bird Wanderlodge manufacturing operation in Fort Valley, Ga.

The Carson brothers grew up in the bus industry. Their father, Dave, was a legendary bus salesman and founder of American International Bus Exchange, which he sold to Hausman Bus Sales in the mid-

1970s.

Dean Carson went to work for Hausman, which eventually became part of Motor Coach Industries, rising to vice president of sales for the

West Coast. He spent nearly 20 years at MCI/Hausman before joining his brother to build their diversified bus business.

Dean Carson ran the sales and

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Dean Carson

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Coach driver being honored for avoiding big rig accident

LAFAYETTE, Ind. — Driver Bill Wilson of Imperial Royal Tours is being honored April 21 for avoiding what could have been a catastrophic accident.

The near-miss took place as Wilson was transporting a tour group to Belterra Casino Resort & Spa in the southeast corner of Indiana.

Wilson's coach was following a tractor-trailer as the truck proceeded toward a highway entrance ramp. Wilson recognized the truck was traveling too fast for road conditions and cautiously backed off even further. It proved to be a wise move as, suddenly, the truck tipped over on the ramp completely blocking access to the interstate.

Wilson's prudent decision to give himself additional following distance allowed him to safely maneuver around the truck as it lay on its side. Not only did he avoid hitting the truck, he safely navigated around sand-filled safety barrels, a bridge abutment and moving traffic before bringing the coach to a safe stop.

Imperial's charter director, Brenda S. Pease, praised her driver for his actions and credited Lancer Insurance

Co. for providing Imperial and its drivers with the training materials that helped avoid the accident.

"We believe that our proactive approach to safety is one of the reasons Mr. Wilson, a very seasoned, well-trained driver, was able to avoid a potential disaster," she said. "We believe as well that the (driver training) memos and safety tapes Lancer has provided for us were instrumental in Mr. Wilson's actions during this incident."

For his proactive approach to accident avoidance, Wilson will be recognized by his company, Lancer Insurance and his peers at Imperial's regularly scheduled driver safety meeting April 21 at company headquarters in Lafayette.



Bill Wilson

Operators finally get their money

Embarrassed Texas officials learn a lesson

AUSTIN, Texas — A top official in Texas state government says motorcoach operators who respond to requests for evacuation assistance in future storm situations will be paid in a timely fashion, unlike the "check's-in-the-mail" fiasco that followed Hurricane Dean last year.

Ted Maddry of the Texas Governor's Division of Emergency Management says Hurricane Dean, which hit the Gulf Coast Aug. 20-21, "was a learning experience" for the state. (See Feb. 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Maddry, described by one motorcoach industry source as "a super nice guy who was professionally embarrassed" by the state's failure to pay coach operators after Hurricane Dean, said he doesn't think it will happen again.

"Hurricane Dean was a good learning experience because it was a shakedown run for all the procedures we had put in place as a result of Hurricane Rita," said

Maddry. "We had 106 contingency contracts in place, and with Hurricane Dean approaching, the decision was made to activate those contracts. But the process was not in place to pay them."

"We learned that, in the future, before we go out and pull the trigger activating contracts, we will have a very systematic process we will go through. We will get the blessing from the hierarchy in government so we are not left out there holding the bag."

Maddry said he will provide the governor's staff with an estimated budget to deal with future evacuations "so they will know up front how much this is going to cost the state."

Overall, Maddry estimates the cost of the Hurricane Dean evacuation operation at about \$3 million.

In a telephone interview, Maddry told *Bus & Motorcoach News* that all motorcoach operators and several independent school districts that provided buses have been paid in full. The Texas Prompt Payment Act, which provides for interest of 9.25 percent on bills not paid by the state within 30 days, added to the cost, he said.

Maddry said the state paid

smaller bus operators first. "We figured they probably had a greater burden to bear than some of the larger operators."

Among several motorcoach operators left waiting for payment was Sandra Haigler, vice president of Lancaster Trailways of the Carolinas in Lancaster, S.C. She submitted one of the biggest invoices from a bus operator, totaling \$119,362.

She said she received full payment shortly after an article appeared in the Feb. 1, issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*, describing what an industry source called the "Texas Hurricane Hat Dance."

"We got paid shortly after the article appeared in your paper," Haigler said.

Asked if her company will respond to another Texas plea for help, Haigler said: "We will. Unfortunately it was just a situation that happened. We recently received a Texas evacuation bid proposal and RFP. We hope it doesn't happen again. We were glad we were able to help. Besides, it was during the slow season."

Haigler said she was reimbursed for the cost of fuel, hotels,

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THE DOCKET

New York City's congestion tolling plan is killed

NEW YORK — The plan to charge a toll for most vehicles that drive in the most-congestion section of New York City — lower Manhattan — was shot down last month by the New York General Assembly in a fusillade of political vitriol.

The controversial plan called for levying a daily “congestion tax” on most vehicles entering the city on weekdays between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.

Cars would be charged \$8 and trucks \$21. There was an effort, lead by the Bus Association of New York, to exclude motorcoaches from the fee. Now the issue is mute — at least for the time being.

The congestion plan was developed by New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg but it was the New York legislature that sent it to the scrap heap. The dumping, however, occurred out of public view. It fizzled in a back room filled with Democratic legislators.

The cause of death is being blamed on a variety of factors but basically it is seen as having failed because there are more people wanting to drive into Manhattan than there are residents wanting to keep drivers out.

Other factors include:

- Mistrust of the government, including broken promises by the

New York Metropolitan Transit Authority

- Political log-rolling in the city council

- Bloomberg's take-no-prisoner's political style

In the state assembly, the concept of congestion pricing faced major opposition from legislators from New York's outer boroughs and city suburbs who said it would unfairly target commuters and their constituents.

New York Speaker of the House Sheldon Silver never let the issue come to a vote on the floor of the state house, saying there were not enough votes for passage. Silver

was blasted by Bloomberg, *The New York Times* and other plan supporters for keeping the legislation bottled up and blocking a public vote.

Bloomberg called it a “special kind of cowardice.”

As a result of the assembly's decision, New York missed out on \$354 million in federal funding from the United States Department of Transportation.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary E. Peters, a proponent of congestion pricing, said New York's “mounting traffic and environmental woes point to congestion pricing as an inevitable solution, even if not in the next few months or

with the assistance of federal urban partnership dollars.”

The Bloomberg administration put a prodigious amount of resources and man-hours into developing the congestion pricing plan and lobbying on its behalf. They scored an initial victory when the New York City Council endorsed the proposal and kicked it to Albany for debate. Governor Paterson also endorsed the idea.

But Bloomberg has less influence over House Speaker Silver, who three years ago squashed Bloomberg's plans for a West Side stadium, than he does over city council members.

Rates climb on Ind. Toll Road; I-Zoom added

GRANGER, Ind. — The cost of driving on the Indiana Toll Road went up last month for all vehicles with three or more axles, as well as two-axle vehicles that aren't using the new I-Zoom electronic tolling system.

Three-axle motorcoaches now pay \$10.75 to travel the entire 157 miles of the toll road that stretches across northern Indiana, up from \$10.

The biggest toll increases were for over-the-road trucks.

For example, a seven-axle big rig now pays \$59.60 to travel the entire 157 miles, up from \$49.25, while the rate for six-axle vehicles jumped to \$32 from \$26.50.

The cost for passenger cars and other two-axle vehicles using I-Zoom, which debuted on the toll road in April, remains at \$4.65 until 2016. However, for those two-axle vehicles that pay cash, the toll jumped to \$8.

Larger vehicles (those with three axles or more) have to pay the higher tolls regardless of whether they use I-Zoom or not.

Coach operators that have a transponder for the Illinois tollway system (I-Pass) can use it on the Indiana Toll Road.

Two years ago, Indiana agreed to a 75-year lease of the road to a consortium of Spanish company Cintra and Australia's Macquarie Infrastructure Group for \$3.8 billion. A provision to increase the toll rate was included in the lease.

FMCSA rules slowed; election may impede

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration is falling behind on its own timetable for issuing rulemakings of concern to the bus industry.

Work on medical certification, the Unified Registration System, and new entrant safety audits has been set back months due to higher priorities and the need for further analysis, according to the agency.

The relevant rulemakings include:

- Medical certification requirements as part of the commercial driver's license. The final rule requiring that medical certification be made part of the driver's licensing and renewal process was to be published in April. It is now scheduled for August publication.

- Unified Registration System. The long-awaited rulemaking

that would replace three current identification and registration systems with one online federal system is in the supplemental notice of proposed rulemaking stage. According to FMCSA, the rule is being amended in compliance with federal laws adopted three years ago. The comment period was scheduled to end on Sept. 28, 2007, but the supplemental rule will not be published until July 30, 2008, with comments being accepted until Nov. 1, 2008. This regulation is seriously behind its legal deadline of Jan. 1, 1998.

- New entrant safety assurance process. Also in final rule status, this regulation would stiffen the requirements for passing the new entrant safety audit. The rule was slated for publication in March

2008 but will not be ready until September.

Duane DeBruyne, spokesman for the agency, says the delays are due to the comprehensiveness of the rulings and the obligation to craft revisions that will ensure the best final product.

Others speculate FMCSA has more on its plate than it can handle. The agency has been under court order to revise the hours-of-service rule for truckers, a task that was completed in December. In addition, the controversial Mexican cross-border trucking program is accused of robbing the agency of time that could be spent on other projects, although FMCSA Director John Hill denies this.

Whatever the reason for the delays, the November election and

the time needed for a new administration to get up and running will probably mean the situation is going to get worse before it gets better. Regulations that are not completed by November will most certainly be delayed until after the new administration is in place.

Any new administration is bound to have its own set of priorities that may or may not conflict with the priorities of an agency. With FMCSA, the situation is exacerbated because this particular agency has no history outside of the Bush administration.

This will be the FMCSA's first transition. Whether the new president is a Republican or a Democrat, an agency led entirely by Bush appointees may be on uncertain terrain in a new policy setting.

CDL safety, security changes are proposed

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration wants to revise commercial driver's license knowledge and skills testing standards and require new federal minimum standards for states to issue commercial learner's permits.

Among other things, the proposed rules are designed to close loopholes in the permit process that allow illegal immigrants, drivers with bad records and others to capitalize on loopholes in the regulations.

Some of the proposed requirements include:

- Successful completion of knowledge and skills testing prior

to issuance of a commercial learner's permit

- All CDL applicants must have a commercial learner's permit for 30 days before applying for a CDL

- All commercial learner's permit applicants be at least 18 years old before applying for a permit

- Increased documentation requirements for CDL and commercial learner's permit applicants to demonstrate legal presence

- Disallowing the use of language interpreters for the knowledge and skills tests

- A commercial learner's permit holder must meet virtually the same requirements as those for a

CDL holder. This means that a driver holding a commercial learner's permit would be subject to the same driver disqualification offenses as apply to a CDL holder

- Increased fraud prevention measures to be implemented by state driver's licensing agencies

Right now, inconsistencies from state to state in verifying citizenship or legal residency leave the permitting process open to fraud. The proposal includes a list of the accepted documents applicants would have to present to apply for the learner's permit.

The proposal acknowledges that the current use of interpreters sets the testing system up for fraud

and poses safety risks. The proposed regulation seeks to prohibit the use of interpreters in the skills portion of the testing.

In publishing the notice of proposed rule making, the FMCSA noted that many of the program areas and issues dealt with in the proposed rules are also addressed in the Department of Homeland Security's final rule implementing the REAL ID Act.

Comments on the proposed rules will be accepted until June 9. Download a pdf of the notice at www.federalregister.gov/OFRUpload/OFRData/2008-07070_PI.pdf. The Docket number for the proposed rule is FMCSA-2007-27659.

Tips for staying legal with independent contractors

SAN FRANCISCO — With the economy slowing, motorcoach operators might be tempted to convert some of their employees, especially drivers, to “independent contractors” rather than lay them off.

Before taking such a step, operators need to be certain the arrangement would stand the test of legal scrutiny.

A new U.S. Court of Appeals decision — in a case involving several taxi companies — may be seen as a list of the things an employer should not do if it is trying to maintain an independent-contractor relationship.

The judges for the U.S. Ninth Circuit held that taxi drivers for several related companies were employees rather than independent contractors for purposes of the National Labor Relations Act. The

cab companies, which were under common ownership, operated in the Oakland, Calif. area.

In opposing an effort by the Teamsters Union to organize the drivers, the owners of the taxi companies argued their drivers were independent contractors rather than employees. The National Labor Relations Board found them to be employees, and the court, applying various common-law factors used to distinguish employed individuals from contractors, agreed.

Here are some of the key factors the court took into consideration:

- The drivers leased their cabs from the company on week-by-week leases; they did not own them.

- The drivers paid weekly fees calculated at the discretion of

the company, but based at least loosely on safety records and experience.

- Drivers were expected to follow the companies’ operating procedures, which included certain rules on how they were to drive, and were required to attend an annual training class on those procedures.

- Although not obliged to wear uniforms, the drivers were to wear specified types of clothing on the job.

- Drivers were not able to

work for other cab companies, nor, while on the job, were they free to turn down dispatched runs.

- The drivers were not permitted to sublease their cabs to other drivers, and were obliged by the companies to carry ads on their vehicles advertising third parties.

With these circumstances — and others — in mind, the court had little trouble in upholding the NLRB decision that the drivers were the employees of the companies and subject to the National

Labor Relations Act.

The one test the Internal Revenue Service has consistently applied in deciding whether motorcoach drivers are employees or contractors is “whose equipment is being operated?”

If the driver brings the coach, there is at least the initial basis for a contractor relationship as long as the driver can choose trips and drive for other companies. If the company furnishes the coach, charters and instructions, the driver is most likely an employee.

Court in New Jersey decides driver can't collect damages

TRENTON, N.J. — A state appeals court decision in New Jersey offers a fresh reminder why workers’ compensation insurance doesn’t just protect employees, it also protects employers.

In the case, a two-judged panel of the state Superior Court ruled that a truck driver struck by a car while making an early-morning delivery at a Taco Bell could not collect damages from his employer because his injuries entitled him to workers’ compensation benefits — and that’s all.

The decision affirmed a lower court ruling in the suit brought by truck driver Joseph Dadura Jr. against his employer, McLane Co. Inc., a company wholly owned by Wal-Mart Stores Inc.

A car, driven by a man who fell asleep at the wheel, hit Dadura while he was unloading food from his truck, which was double parked in West New York, N.J., in January 2003, according to court documents.

Dadura had turned on the truck’s four-way lights but did not set up traffic cones, flags or other safety paraphernalia since none had been issued by his employer. He also had not been trained on how to make deliveries at that stop, he said in his court filings.

In his suit, Dadura maintained he had repeatedly warned his supervisors of the dangers he faced while having to double-park the truck for deliveries at the Taco

Bell. Those warnings went unheeded, Dadura asserted, and he was threatened with firing if he refused to continue the deliveries.

He had sued Wal-Mart and McLane, and also the Taco Bell and its owners, alleging their liability for the serious injuries he sustained. He argued the delivery company should have realized the high likelihood of his injuries occurring and its failure to take steps to prevent them constituted gross negligence on its part.

Dadura did not, however, sue the driver of the car — who was given three years probation for his role in the crash. In 2006, his claims against the Taco Bell were dismissed.

In dismissing Dadura’s claims against Wal-Mart and McLane, the judges said there was not enough evidence in the case to show the companies “deliberately intended to harm (Dadura) or knew that the consequences of its inaction were substantially certain to result in harm” — an exception to the state workers’ compensation law which might have entitled him to damages.

In other words, Dadura was not entitled to recover civil damages in court for work-related injuries because the employer carried workers’ comp insurance. Under the law in most states, all claims must be resolved within the confines of the workers’ compensation policy.

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Rhode Island governor names transportation planning panel

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Rhode Island Gov. Donald Carcieri has appointed a 12-member panel to assess the state's transportation needs, and to come up with recommendations for financing road and bridge repairs during the next four to five years.

Most of the state's highway system was constructed between the 1950s and 1970s. Now, the roads are aging and deteriorating, but the major source of funding, the Highway Trust Fund, is facing a deficit.

Rhode Island needs an estimated \$600 million in the next five years for bridge repair and replacement alone.

But, according to Carcieri, "we could see a 30 to 40 percent

decrease in federal transportation funding.

If that happens, Rhode Island could stand to lose \$60 million to \$70 million in transportation funding each year."

To come up with solutions, the governor has formed the Blue Ribbon Panel for Transportation Funding to review transportation priorities, identify funding strategies and create a balanced approach for investment.

Jerome Williams, director of the Rhode Island DOT is resigning his position and will lead the panel.

The panel will work for six months, gathering information and studying the issue, before making recommendations.

Road plan advances in Missouri

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — A committee of the Missouri Senate has endorsed a proposed amendment to the state constitution that would increase funding for highways without increasing tax rates.

Sen. John Loudon, worried about long-term funding options in the state because of an expected drop in future federal highway funding, introduced a measure that would earmark 10 percent of state revenue growth each year for roads, bridges and other transportation projects.

That money now pays for services that include schools and mental health services. Roads are fund-

ed with fuel, vehicle and license tag fees.

Using this year as a base, Loudon said the plan would send \$36 million to transportation in 2010. Funds would grow to more than \$1.3 billion by 2030.

Officials with the Missouri Department of Transportation have warned that state transportation funding "falls off a cliff" in 2010. At that time, funding is expected to drop from \$1.2 billion annually to about \$570 million because the state will start repaying bonds approved by voters in 2004 that are being used for road and bridge work.

Loudon's plan would send 95 percent of new revenue to roads and bridges. Transit would claim 5 percent.

Projects likely to benefit from the plan include a \$3.5 billion rebuild of Interstate 70 from Independence to Lake Saint Louis, Mo.

Pending approval by the state General Assembly and governor, the proposal would go before voters in the November election. The joint resolution — SJR43 — cleared the Senate Governmental Accountability and Fiscal Oversight Committee and is awaiting consideration on the Senate floor.

New Hampshire highway plan wins support

CONCORD, N.H. — A 10-year highway plan that cuts \$2 billion from the current plan has passed the New Hampshire House of Representatives and been sent to the state Senate for consideration.

Gov. John Lynch, whose office originated and supports the measure, described the previous bill as 35 years' worth of commitments crammed into a 10-year plan with no real expectation of completion for many projects.

"Although these cuts are diffi-

cult, communities will now know that projects included in the 10-year plan are likely to be constructed," said Lynch.

Preserving and maintaining the highway system that exists has taken precedence over new construction in the latest plan. High on the list is repair or replacement of 89 red-listed bridges, repairs to Interstate 93, repair of the Memorial Bridge in Portsmouth, and widening a section of the Spaulding Turnpike.

Critics believe that reducing the plan to \$2.3 billion is overly optimistic without raising taxes, considering the condition of the state highway fund.

However, Rep. David Campbell believes other resources should be explored before moving to taxation to shore up the highway fund. For instance, an already approved increase in tolls on the state's three turnpikes will finance work on the Spaulding Turnpike and I-93.

Utah eyes 80 mph on I-15

SALT LAKE CITY — Utah is moving closer to allowing vehicles to drive 80 miles per hour, or faster, along a stretch of Interstate 15 in the central and southern part of the state.

Utah law now allows vehicles traveling along I-15 from Nephi to Cedar City to drive 75 mph.

Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. has signed HB406 into law, giving the Utah Department of Transportation authority to determine if the speed limit can be safely increased to 80 mph or higher between Mile Markers 222 and 64.

I-15 runs through Utah from the Arizona state line to Idaho.

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New passengers find lots of reasons to take the bus

An interesting phenomenon is occurring as intercity bus travel has rebounded during the past couple of years.

New riders are going on the Internet in significant numbers to share their experiences — bad and good, and in some cases making the case for others to hop on a motorcoach for their next trip.

In some cases, these unsolicited testimonials can even provide fodder for marketing bus travel. Here's an example:

In the deeply entrenched hierarchy of transportation options, flying has always been comfortable in its position above all others. In recent years, however, air travel's superior convenience has been eroded by crowded routes, increasing delays, maintenance issues, lousy service, and long security lines.

At the same time, increases in fuel prices have made budget air fares difficult to find. By now, the glamour of flight has faded in the eyes of most travelers.

Meanwhile, the "lowly" bus industry has been working to craft its niche in the budget market. More comfortable buses and cheaper fares are covering more routes than ever before.

Here are the reasons newcomers say they are considering taking the bus:

1. Cost. Low-cost airlines have made huge progress in America over the last two decades but, even at their most discounted, it's hard to compete with the bus on price. The well-known Chinatown buses continue to operate between Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Washington D.C with fares around \$15 one way. At the same time, newcomers like megabus.com and

BoltBus are introducing fares on similar routes as low as \$1. Even Greyhound has introduced a group of fares that range in price from \$13 to \$34 one way.

2. Coverage. Cheap buses have always been available to take you around town, but it used to be that longer routes were limited to trips between New York and Boston. Recently, however, these low-cost buses have dramatically increased their route coverage extending up and down both coasts, around the Midwest, and even, with some changes between carriers, across the country.

Currently, Gotobus and the megabus.com dominate these networks.

Of course, if you are thinking about taking a long trip, Greyhound still claims it will take you

anywhere in the U.S. for \$99.

3. Time. It's true that while the bus plods along around 55-60 mph, the airplane is high above, cruising at hundreds of miles an hour. But when you add up connection times and layovers, indirect routes that cater to an airline's hubs instead of your travel plans, security line waiting, and the time it takes to get to and from airports, the time savings in transit are drastically reduced.

The bus, which has a main station or curbside waiting in the center of most cities, may indeed get you there faster, especially if you are traveling to a nearby city. This article will not attempt to get into the hassle caused by delayed, canceled or missed airline connections, but it does remind one of the next point...

4. Reliability. The bus generally

will continue driving through conditions that would stop your personal car, let alone an airplane. It is very rare for a bus to be canceled and the companies know their routes well enough that significant delays are rare (though they do occur, of course). When a bus ticket is purchased you can almost be guaranteed that the bus will depart as scheduled.

5. It's More Green. Many analysts say one airplane flight produces the same amount of CO2 per person per mile as if the passengers were driving alone in separate cars. In addition, airplanes emit many other harmful materials and it all goes directly into the upper atmosphere. The result of this, we are told, is that the damage to the atmosphere done by flying is almost twice that of driving the

same number of miles in a car.

When you look at the numbers, a full bus is much more gentle on the environment than a flight of the same distance. That said, the debate is ongoing.

6. Free Wi-Fi. The second major complaint commonly voiced about bus travel, after its perceived slowness, is that it is uncomfortable. Interestingly, as many airlines strip amenities to become more bus-like, some bus lines have taken action to make travel more comfortable. A notable example is the BoltBus, which in addition to its \$1 fares, offers free Wi-Fi access on all of its routes.

7. Flexibility. Many bus lines offer exceptional flexibility with their tickets. Greyhound, for one, allows you to use a ticket for the reserved route on any day or time for which there is availability, up to a year after the original departure date.

Other companies, notably megabus.com, allow you to change your reservation with 24 hours advance notice and only a \$1 service charge. Drivers often are very generous with the baggage allowances as long as the bus is not too full, something you will never experience flying.

8. You can see where you're going. Compare flying from Paris to Bordeaux to the delicious pleasure of a bus trip through the French farm lands, villages and countryside.

The humble bus is coming back as a cheap and friendly alternative to flying. With the environmental controversy, security and scheduling hassles, and increasing prices and safety concerns, new passengers are asking: Why not give this old, budget travel standby another chance?

Air travel reaches new high in indignity

LOS ANGELES — Travel by bus may not always be the height of pleasantness but it seldom dips to the depths of this air travel indignity.

A Texas woman complained she was forced to remove a nipple ring with pliers to get through security to board a plane.

In the wake of the episode, the Transportation Security Administration says it's changing the way its officers search passengers with body piercings.

Mandi Hamlin, 37, had demanded an apology and her Los Angeles-based attorney sent a letter to the TSA requesting a civil rights investigation.

Hamlin was trying to board a flight from Lubbock to Dallas when she was scanned by a TSA agent after passing through a large

metal detector without problems. The female TSA agent used a handheld detector that beeped when it passed in front of Hamlin's chest.

Hamlin said she told the woman she was wearing nipple piercings. The agent then called over her male colleagues, one of whom said she would have to remove the jewelry, Hamlin said.

Hamlin said she could not remove them and asked whether she could instead display her pierced breasts in private to the female agent. But several other male officers told her she could not board her flight until the jewelry was out, she said.

Hamlin was taken behind a curtain and managed to remove one bar-shaped piercing but had trouble with the second, a ring. She

said the officer gave her pliers to remove the ring, a process which caused pain.

The TSA said in a statement on its Web site the officers properly followed procedures, but that the procedures must change. In the future passengers can either allow a visual inspection of their piercings, or remove them, the agency said.

The statement stopped short of apologizing to Hamlin.

"TSA acknowledges that our procedures caused difficulty for the passenger involved and regrets the situation in which she found herself," the agency said in its statement. "We appreciate her raising awareness on this issue and we are changing the procedures to ensure that this does not happen again."

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ISSUE NO. 122

Capitol Hill tour bus ban is blasted by bus groups

WASHINGTON — A plan that calls for drastically changing the way motorcoach tour groups get to the U.S. Capitol has been blasted by five bus industry-related associations.

The plan calls for tour buses to drop off their passengers at Washington's Union Station where they would board transit buses and be shuttled to the new Capitol Visitor Center that's scheduled to open later this year.

The shuttle would, of course, charge a fee.

The associations, which call themselves the Travel & Tourism Advocacy Group, say the plan "would be a disaster for the District of Columbia, the people who visit here, and the organizations that carry those people to D.C."

The advocacy group is comprised of the American Bus Association, the Guide Service of Washington, the National Tour Association, the Student Youth Travel Association, and the United Motorcoach Association.

The associations' outrage over the proposal was delivered at an April meeting of the House Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Building and Emergency Management by ABA Pres-

ident and CEO Peter Pantuso.

The shuttle concept, which has been simmering on Washington's back burner for years, has moved to the forefront as the long-delayed Capitol Visitor Center has begun nearing completion.

The visitor center is a \$550 complex that, as its name implies, will become the access point for the three million tourists who enter the U.S. Capitol annually.

The shuttle bus plan is being pushed in the name of security. The old chestnut has been raised that private tour coaches are somehow more of a security threat than CNG-laden public transit buses.

Pantuso told subcommittee members that the Travel & Tourism

Advocacy Group had analyzed the proposal and found "several deficiencies that call into question its usefulness from a security as well as transportation standpoint." Among the deficiencies:

- Union Station does not have the space to accommodate the hundreds of motorcoaches that come to Washington daily. Nor does it have the space to handle the dozens of D.C. Circulator buses that would be needed to shuttle the coach passengers to the visitor center.

"A modern motorcoach will seat approximately 55 passengers," Pantuso noted. "A D.C. transit bus holds several fewer passengers. So for each motorcoach unloaded at Union Station, one would need one

circulator bus plus several additional seats. The potential for mass confusion at best is obvious."

- Most motorcoach passengers coming to D.C. are part of a group, and many of those groups are composed of children. "The coalition's fear is that the proposal will make it more difficult for groups to stay together," said Pantuso.

- The third and perhaps the most important issue is the assumption that D.C. Circulator buses are somehow more secure than private motorcoaches and therefore present less of a threat to the Capitol complex.

"This is simply not true and for several reasons," said Pantuso. "First, motorcoaches are chartered

by groups of people. The people in the group are not strangers to each other. Their security comes from knowing who is on the bus. That is not the case when the bus is a city bus.

"Anyone can board the D.C. Circulator at Union Station and ride to the (Capitol). That scenario begs the question: Which group has the better security?" Pantuso said.

Finally, many city transit buses are fueled by compressed natural gas, which is more of a threat to explode than a standard motorcoach which uses diesel fuel.

A much better plan, said Pantuso, is to screen tour buses so they can drop off their passengers close to the Capitol Visitor Center.

Immigration arrests on Greyhound, Amtrak protested

NEW YORK — Doing the right thing has succeeded in making Greyhound Lines and Amtrak targets of demonstrators protesting the companies' collaboration with border and immigration agents who arrest passengers traveling between U.S. cities.

Last month, several dozen demonstrators gathered in front of Penn Station in Manhattan to

protest Amtrak's collaboration with immigration officials and then they marched to the Port Authority to condemn Greyhound's collaboration with sweeps looking for illegals.

The protesters chanted "transportation, not deportation!" and "immigrant rights are human rights."

The protesters demanded that Amtrak and Greyhound — at the

least — warn passengers about the raids in advance, publicly apologize and provide ticket refunds to those who have been arrested.

Amtrak has agreed to cooperate with border inspections on a random basis within 75 miles of the border, said Cliff Cole, a spokesperson for the company. "We're merely facilitating their request to board the train," he said of the

Border Patrol agents. The train between Chicago and New York passes within 75 miles of the border, he said.

Greyhound also said it simply complies with law enforcement requests, be it local, state or federal.

"We are under no obligation to inform customers of law enforcement activity at any time," said Greyhound spokesman Dustin Clark.

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ASA Electronics provides system to weapons unit in Iraq

ELKHART, In. — An observation and back-up camera system built by ASA Electronics and donated to the U.S. Air Force is helping safeguard a weapons intelligence team working in Iraq.

ASA, which manufactures and supplies mobile audio and video equipment to the bus and motorcoach industry, provided a Voyager Observation/Back-up Camera System to help increase visibility,

maneuverability and safety for a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle used in the field.

The weapons team uses the vehicle to investigate and collect forensic data on improvised explosive devices (IEDs) set off in Iraq in an effort to identify bomb makers and, ultimately, to save the lives of American soldiers.

While on its missions, the team had found it very difficult to back

up the vehicle without a spotter, and it was dangerous to use a spotter due to sniper threat.

To ameliorate the threat, the Voyager® Observation system, complete with a heavy-duty LCD monitor, backup camera and accompanying cables, is enhancing visibility and, in most cases, eliminating the need for an outsider spotter.

In recognition of ASA's support

and as a gesture of gratitude, the weapons intelligence team has given ASA Electronics an American flag that was taken on a counter-IED mission.

"When presented with this opportunity, ASA jumped at the chance to support our troops," said ASA President Brent Barrow. "We are proud of what these men and women do for our country every day and we were more than happy

to donate our products to aid in the weapons intelligence team's daily safety."

ASA's product line includes Jensen A/V equipment.

Parker Hannifin acquires Vansco

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — Bus and motorcoach industry supplier Vansco Electronics has been acquired by Parker Hannifin, the Cleveland-based multinational maker of motion and control technologies.

Vansco designs and produces rugged electronic systems and components for buses, trucks, agricultural equipment and other machinery. Motor Coach Industries and New Flyer Industries are two of its key customers.

The company was founded by Ed and wife Terry Van Humbeck — in their Winnipeg basement — about 30 years ago and it has grown to upwards of \$180 million in annual sales and more than 1,000 employees. It remains based in Winnipeg, where it, MCI and New Flyer have large manufacturing facilities.

The company has been renamed Parker Vansco. Terms of the sale were not disclosed.

Niels Erik Hansen, CEO of Vansco, said there is no indication there will be any layoffs at the Winnipeg operations and the hope is that there will be growth.

Parker Hannifin is a \$10-billion company whose hydraulic components and systems are sold worldwide.

Jim Cartwright, a spokesman for Parker Hannifin, said hydraulics are moving from mechanical to electronic controls and that's why Vansco was targeted for acquisition.

"It used to be that a backhoe operator would have 22 sticks to control all the hydraulics," Cartwright said. "Now he might have five electronic controls at his fingertips and a four-direction job stick."

He said Vansco will give Parker the ability to provide more of those electronic controls and the computer programming behind it. He said Parker was interested in future sales opportunities with some of Vansco's customers like Buhler Versatile, New Flyer and MCI.

Parker Hannifin bought Vansco from two Toronto-based private equity firms, Kilmer Capital Partners and Perseis Private Equity Fund (formerly Borealis Private Equity), which had acquired it in 2004. Ed Van Humbeck only had a small equity stake left in Vansco prior to the latest deal.

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FTA plans 'partnership' seminars

WASHINGTON — The Federal Transit Administration is conducting a series of seminars this year on creating public-private partnerships that could give private bus operators greater insight into working with their local transit agency, learning the ropes of how transit business is conducted, and perhaps getting in on the ground floor when public-private transit partnership opportunities develop.

The seminars are planned for four locations across the U.S.

An invitation to the seminars sent by Deputy FTA Administrator

Sherry Little said attendees will be among the first "to learn the ins and outs of creating successful public-private partnerships and how you can play a significant role in leading positive, forward-thinking change in the transit industry."

Each seminar will feature speakers with specific experience in transit public-private partnerships. The seminars will also provide practical information, such as specific federal, state and local public-private partnerships laws, ways to leverage financing, how to facilitate public-private partner-

ships for transit-oriented development, plus a roundtable discussion on the mechanics of developing partnerships.

The FTA is working with the National Council for Public-Private Partnerships and other organizations to conduct the seminars. Tentative dates and cities are:

June 11-12-Denver, Colorado

July 30-31-San Francisco

Sept. 17-18-New York City

Oct. 22-23-Dallas

For additional information, go to <http://www.ncppp.org>. E-mail Little at Sherry.Little@dot.gov.

New rules

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

work it was doing (which, given LTD's glib noticing method, should surprise no one).

In the end, such shady behavior on the part of federally funded transit agencies, such skirting of the rules, led us to the new rules LTD now complains about. Those new rules give more structure to the timing and level of detail of LTD's notices. Predictably, that has brought the private sector out of the woodwork as the true depth and

scope of LTD's private charter operations have become known.

It's not that the private sector wasn't interested previously in the private charter work LTD was doing. Rather, LTD was successfully railroading its approval of private charter work past the private sector by keeping the details to itself. Under the new rules, LTD no longer can do so.

As for these new rules, it could be argued they actually aren't "new" at all. In fact, the process of developing these new rules began four years ago as part of the

Highway Reauthorization Tax Act of 2004 and has taken a very long time to dutifully run its course. Negotiations between work groups representing the private sector and transit have been extensive, comment periods collectively have spanned several years, and the new rules have been available in final form since early January.

That's compelling evidence against LTD's claims of having been blindsided by the planned April 30 implementation of these new rules. When LTD asserts that it didn't know new FTA rules were

Smaller biodiesel producers fail quality tests most often

GOLDEN, Colo. — Small and medium producers of biodiesel fuel had "significant failure rates" in the U.S. Department of Energy's 2007 biodiesel quality survey, while about 90 percent of all the biodiesel tested met specifications.

To evaluate the quality of biodiesel, the DOE's National Renewable Energy Laboratory conducts periodic surveys to see if the fuel meets recognized international specifications. Biodiesel must meet the specs to be considered a legal fuel and qualify for tax credits.

The samples were tested for a half-dozen properties that are considered critical for engine operation: oxidation stability, flash point and alcohol content, cloud point, water and sediment, acid value, and free and total glycerin. They

also were analyzed for phosphorus, sodium, potassium, magnesium and calcium, which are poisons to advanced emissions control equipment.

For the 2007 survey, the agency collected samples representing 70 percent of the U.S. market. Producers meeting the National Biodiesel Board's voluntary BQ-9000 specifications accounted for 74 percent of the volume in the survey. Large producers and BQ-9000 producers hardly ever failed to meet the specifications.

However, small and medium biodiesel producers "had significant failure rates," according to the NREL's report. The producers failed to meet oxidation stability specifications most often — 30 percent of their samples failed.

coming, it illustrates that LTD management has either been asleep at the switch or has been in denial over the potential loss of revenues from private charter operations.

Bottom line: It was irresponsible for LTD to continue to work with Olympic Trials organizers as it

did, in light of the fact a storm obviously was closing in on LTD's ability to perform on its obligations. At a minimum, LTD should have strongly encouraged event organizers to have a contingency plan in place with the private sector.

Reprinted from The Register-Guard, Eugene, Ore.

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Trailways partner to deliver onboard info

FAIRFAX, Va. — Trailways Transportation System has announced a partnership with a Florida company that plans to deliver targeted advertising messages and entertainment to passengers on Trailways coaches.

The exclusive arrangement is between Trailways and Traveltism Inc. of Naples, Fla., a 15-month-old company that produces custom passenger safety briefings and advertisements to be shown through coach video systems.

Traveltism will be installing its equipment and technology on the coaches of Trailways members, permitting operators to use updated weekly material.

“Big Red passengers will join their airline counterparts in receiving up-to-date information and being entertained as they travel,” said Gale Ellsworth, Trailways president.

According to Peter Stone, Traveltism’s operational director, brief demographically targeted commercials will run on coach monitors at the beginning and end of Trailways trips. “Our software profiles the passengers — whether they are senior citizens or students,” said Stone. “This gives advertisers the best exposure for their dollars. Also, they know their messages will be heard because passengers are a captive audience

and won’t walk out.”

For example, for senior passengers there could be ads for cruise companies, senior living developments, restaurants, clothing, golf courses and television programs.

Stone said the partnership produces several benefits for Trailways member operators, including a new revenue stream with no capital expenditure.

“The only cost to Trailways member companies will be for a company employee to input data into a computer,” he said.

Ellsworth echoed Stone. She said Traveltism’s media platform gives advertisers ready access to motorcoach travelers, plus “our

member companies will realize new revenue that will help them offset today’s significant rising fuel and insurance costs. And, it is another way we demonstrate our commitment to use cutting edge technologies for improvement in passenger safety, services and benefits.”

In addition to providing advertising and safety briefings, the system will deliver feature-length movies. In the “near future,” the technology will also make wireless Internet available to passengers.

The plan for rolling out the new system is to start in the northeastern U.S. late this summer. The West Coast will be next, followed by the Midwest and Southeast.

Calendar

APRIL 2008

30 National Interstate Corp. Annual Meeting, 3250 Interstate Dr., Richfield, Ohio. Info: www.nationalinterstate.com.

JUNE 2008

7 Museum of Bus Transportation Spring Fling, Hershey, Pa. Info: Go to www.busmuseum.org.

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

24-26 National Tour Association Grassroots Symposium, Washington, D.C. Info: Go to www.NTA.travel.

Authors to be featured at bus museum Spring Fling

HERSHEY, Pa. — The Museum of Bus Transportation’s popular Spring Fling gathering on June 7 will feature an author’s table as an added attraction this year.

Five authors — so far — have committed to attend and autograph their bus industry-related books. Two of the writers are new authors: Margean Gladysz, who wrote *A Spy On The Bus: The Memoirs Of A Company Rat*. Gladysz will intro-

duce herself and her book, which is being released in mid-May.

James Edward Alexander, author of *Half Way Home From Kinderlout*, will be the second new face. His book is now available on Amazon.com.

Joining them will be Ken Springirth who offers *Johnstown Trolley and Incline*, *Greater Erie Trolleys*, *Pittsburgh Streamlined Trolleys* and *Suburban Philadel-*

phia Trolleys; John Dockendorf with his *Greyhound in Postcards* book, and Bob Beard and his *Square Wheels on the Interstate*. Additional authors will be announced on the museum Website.

The annual Spring Fling, Bus Show and Bus Memorabilia Flea Market, the largest event of its kind in North America, displays the vintage buses the museum owns. The

affair’s principal activities are conducted at the museum’s memorial annex and grounds and there is no fee to attend the annex festivities.

Parking also is free at the museum building at 161 Museum Drive in Hershey. A free shuttle will operate between the museum and the annex from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Lunch will be offered in return for donations to the museum.

The museum will be open from

9 a.m. till 5 p.m. and all three floors of antique autos, vintage buses and associated displays will be available at regular admission fees.

The 2008 fling marks the first time the event has had major sponsors from within the bus industry.

For more information, or to be a vendor at the flea market, go to: www.busmuseum.org, or e-mail thebusmuseum@yahoo.com, or call (717) 566-7100, Ext. 119.

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Dean Carson

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

leasing operation while Dale Carson headed Complete Coach Works, one of the industry's premier bus retrofit, rebuild, repair and modification companies.

Flying, skiing, snowboarding and motorcycle riding were among Mr. Carson's passions. He flew daily between Flabob Airport in Rubidoux, Calif., which was a 10-minute drive from his office, and Big Bear City Airport, roughly 50 miles and 70 minutes away by car, but only 20 minutes by plane and close to his home.

Mr. Carson was an experienced pilot, having flown for 30 years.

It was during a routine night flight home to Big Bear that his Cirrus SR22 single-engine, four-seat plane crashed into a snow-covered mountain. The Cirrus is best known as the plane that has its own parachute. Theoretically, if the plane runs into trouble, the parachute can be deployed and the plane will float to earth.

He had left Rubidoux Flabob Airport about 9:30 p.m. Shortly after midnight, a family member called the local sheriff's office to report him missing.

Early the next morning, Dale Carson chartered a helicopter to fly over the rugged San Bernardino Mountains to search for the plane.

However, it was a California Highway Patrol pilot that spotted the downed craft at 8:22 a.m., about

100 yards from an abandoned U.S. Forest Service lookout tower on Butler Peak.

Firefighters and county search-and-rescue team members rode snowcats and all-terrain vehicles to the crash site.

The treacherous mountainside was covered with up to 2 feet of snow, plus mud, making it difficult to reach the wreckage. An investigator with the county coroner's office was flown in to recover Mr. Carson's remains.

The crash site was about 11 miles west of Big Bear City Airport. No distress signal was received, and the National Transportation Safety Board is investigating.

Complete Coach Works Vice President Macy Neshati, who acted as the family spokesman following the crash, said Mr. Carson's flight "was a route he was quite familiar with.

"We don't know if it was weather, health or mechanical," said Neshati. "It was just basically a routine commute for him."

Dick Seitzinger, a retired MCI/Hausman sales vice president, knew Dean Carson for nearly 30 years, having been Mr. Carson's boss for 15 years and then having the roles reversed and working for him as a consultant for another five years.

"We had a magnificent relationship," said Seitzinger. "He was a super pusher, a good one. He was a great guy."

Others who knew and worked with Mr. Carson expressed similar

sentiments.

"He was a good guy, a real bus man of the Jerry Hausman, Clarence Cornell ilk," said one former colleague. "I don't know anyone who didn't like him."

In a statement, the Carson family said, "Dean was known for his unrivaled passion for the (bus) industry, surpassed only by his dedication and devotion to his family and friends and his passion for life."

Added Neshati: "He was very smart, very gregarious. He always had a ready smile for everyone. He was very passionate about life, about his family — one of those guys who was always going full-throttle.

"While his shoes can never be filled, the businesses that he was so instrumental in creating will continue to operate under the leadership of his dedicated employees and management team."

In 2001, Mr. Carson was recognized at the Inland Empire International Business Association's Exporter of the Year awards, and three years ago he was named Regional Exporter of the Year by the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Transit Sales International sells used and rebuilt buses throughout the Western Hemisphere and elsewhere in the world.

In addition to his wife, Diane, and his brother, Mr. Carson is survived by three adult children, David, Kyle and Katie; his mother, Carol, and his sister Dawn O'Keefe.

MCI

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

owned coach sales at MCI, noted there was "a significant rise" in pre-owned coach sales during the first quarter. "The same increase in customer demand for new coaches is being seen across all spectrums of the industry," said Guralnick.

The economic stimulus program cited by MCI was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Bush in mid-February. It includes business tax incentives for buying new equipment, including a one-time depreciation tax deduction equal to 50 percent of the cost of specific kinds of new investment during this year.

Qualifying investments include tangible property, such as business equipment. The law also raises the limits on the value of new productive capital (machinery, equipment and some other types of property) that businesses may exclude from their income as business expenses during 2008.

Previously, the limit on expensable productive capital investments had been \$128,000, reduced (but not below zero) by the amount by which the value of those investments exceeded \$510,000. The law

raises those limits to \$250,000 and \$800,000 respectively.

Meanwhile, Standard & Poor's Ratings Services reduced MCI debt ratings, including the corporate credit rating, to "CCC-" from "CCC," based on the company's performance and ongoing worries over the its ability to make debt payments and refinance its debt. S&P also said MCI's outlook was negative.

That MCI's credit rating would be lowered at a time when the economy is souring and the financial markets are in the midst of a credit crunch seemed almost a certainty.

The company has long carried a busload of debt, totaling \$570 million at the end of last year, but its owners, JLL Partners, a New York-based private equity investment firm, have — for nine years — supported MCI and its heavy debt load.

Still, the latest rating action by S&P, and by Moody's earlier, "reflects continued weak operating results and increased concern over the company's ability to make debt service payments and to refinance credit facilities maturing in December," said S&P.

MCI declined to comment on S&P's action.

Texas

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

drivers, coach maintenance and insurance.

Maddy estimated that 95 percent of the businesses and individ-

uals his office dealt with in connection with the hurricane were "very understanding about it."

"I felt for them personally, trying to keep them informed as best I could on the status of the funding situation," Maddy said. "Some at the tail end of the operation had to wait awhile. "You have to understand that this event was totally unanticipated. State leadership was in a position of they're damned if they do and damned if they don't. We were watching Hurricane Dean come across the Gulf. We had a great number of assisted care people who had to be moved, so we exercised our bus and fuel contracts. Things like that cost money."

Maddy said the state was fortunate to receive federal assistance for reimbursements, but was slow in coming up with matching funds.

"At the same time, the state had to pay unanticipated claims," he said. "You don't go to the governor and say I need this amount of money and he writes a check. It takes a while to get through the process."

Some motorcoach operators told Maddy they had similar experiences trying to get paid after hurricane duty in Florida. "They said it took about six months," he said, "so I don't feel too badly. At the same time, we ought to be able to pay. These people (motorcoach operators) depend on us and I don't want to ruin our reputation with them. We want them to come back to support us when we need them."

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People



Donald Ferrone



William Gentry



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John Ketwig

Trailways Transportation System has added three members to its board.

Donald Ferrone, president of **Prairie Trailways Charter & Tour** in Chicago; *William W. Gentry*, president of **Gentry Trailways Charter & Tour** in Knoxville, Tenn., and *Thomas V. McCaughey*, president of **Flagship Trailways** in Johnston, R.I., were elected to three-year terms.

Ferrone has been in the tourism industry most of his life. The family business, **Chicago Sightseeing Company**, celebrated 100 years in business in 2007.

The family coach operation Gentry heads was founded by his father 55 years ago.

McCaughey entered the coach industry in 2001, following a 25-year career in the waste service industry, working for a company that belonged to his family.

Gregg Goedde has been promoted to vice president of **ABC Bus Leasing Inc.**, a unit of **ABC Financial Services** and **ABC Companies**. As part of his new responsibilities, Goedde will oversee and manage ABC's private placement program, in addition to a portion of the internal financing program.

Transit seeks charter firms

The following public transit provider has informed the UMA 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

Goedde, who has worked in the motorcoach industry for 16 years, joined ABC Companies in 1996. Previously he was employed by **GE Capital**, specializing in the motorcoach leasing and financing.

A native of Wisconsin, Goedde holds a business degree from Gustavus Adolphus College in Minnesota and a master's in business administration from University of Minnesota Carlson School of Business.

John Andrews has joined **ABC Companies** as vice president/public sector division, with responsibility for the continued growth and expansion of ABC's public transit business. With more than 35 years of industry experience, Andrews' expertise spans both private- and public-sector operations, holding senior management positions throughout his career.

Most recently, Andrews served as vice president sales for **GFI Genfare**, the leading manufacturer of bus fare collection systems in North America. Previously, he headed public-sector sales at **MCI** and **Hausman Bus Sales**. He also held key positions at **Trailways**, **Greyhound** and **SEPTA** (Philadelphia's regional transit authority).

He has served on the boards of directors of a number of transit industry associations, including the **American Public Transportation Association**. He is a graduate of the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

Prevost Car has announced that *John Ketwig* has been named branch manager of the company's parts and service center in South Plainfield, N.J.

Randy Castillo, Prevost service network manager, said Ketwig's extensive background in the automotive industry will bring additional depth to the Prevost team. Ketwig worked for one of the world's leading luxury car manufacturers.

The Prevost facility Ketwig will manage specializes in coach, motorhome, and transit bus repairs.

Anna Amos, colonel of the **South Carolina State Transport Police** and acting chair of **IRP Inc.**, the repository of the International Registration Plan, has been appointed director of the Office of Safety Programs of the **Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration**.

The FMCSA safety programs office oversees the Motor Carrier

time to respond to this notice.

Berlin/Gorham, N.H. Deadline: May 12, 2008. Write to: Beverly Raymond, Director, North Country Transit, 31 Pleasant St., Ste. 100, Berlin, NH 03570. Phone: (603) 752-1741.

Safety Assistance Program and the pilot program that allows Mexican trucks into the U.S.

Sarah Willoughby has been named executive director of the **Greater Wilmington (Del.) Convention & Visitors Bureau**. Wil-

loughby joined the Wilmington CVB in September, 2004, as director of tourism development and has been serving as the acting executive director of the bureau since last August.

Arizona native *Michael Leyva*

has joined the **Galena/Jo Daviess County (Ill.) Convention & Visitors Bureau** as director of sales. Most recently, Leyva was director of tourism education and development for the **Arizona Office of Tourism**.

SPRINTER

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