

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY



Upscale cutaway coaches like this ABC M1000, photographed at Shattuck-St. Mary's School in Fairbault, Minn., are gaining in popularity.

35-foot Redux

Operators bite bullet, buy cutaways

Motorcoach operators — whose calls for major bus manufacturers to build a midsize highway coach have gone unanswered — apparently are losing their patience.

Weary of the wait, many are turning to cutaway-style buses to fill what they say is an urgent and growing need for a 35-foot, bus that matches the durability and ride of a 40- or 45-foot motorcoach.

Builders of cutaway buses say

they've seen an increase in sales of their top-of-the-line models, and much of the surge is due to the unavailability of a midsize highway coach.

"We held out as long as we could," said David Brown, president of Holiday Tours in Randleman, N.C., who just took delivery of four M1000 buses, ABC Companies' premium body-on-chassis midsize model.

Brown and other operators who've been clamoring for smaller highway coaches say the size of charter groups is smaller these days and many of their customers are not willing to pay the price of a full size coach they can't fill. "They feel if they use a larger bus, they're paying too much," he said.

Yet, they still want the comfortable ride they get from a full-size

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Medical examiner list is teed up by FMCSA; group plans to certify

WASHINGTON — The thorny issue of whether the federal government should establish a national registry of individuals certified to perform medical examinations for commercial vehicle drivers is being teed up again by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

The FMCSA has scheduled a high-profile public meeting June 22 to explore the controversial concept and to hear from experts of every stripe. The meeting is likely to be contentious.

In announcing the public session, the FMCSA also made clear it's interested in developing information that could lead to making improvements to the system for assuring the physical qualifications of commercial drivers — under its current legal authority.

The idea of a National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners has been a just-below-the-surface issue since the Senate version of the massive highway and public transit reauthorization bill was introduced more than 18 months ago.

Included in the bill, thanks to the efforts of the United Motorcoach Association, is language requiring the establishment of a

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MONTGOMERY, Texas — Three long-time truck and bus safety professionals have created a not-for-profit organization that will certify the proficiency of individuals who conduct U.S. Department of Transportation medical examinations.

The formation of the National Academy of DOT Medical Examiners, or NADME, was announced in Washington, D.C., last month by its organizers.

The purpose of NADME "is to promote and enhance the quality and level of professional knowledge and skills of medical practitioners and other individuals who perform or assist in the performance of medical examinations to determine the physical qualification of drivers of commercial motor vehicles," said Robert A. Hirsch, who is president and founder of the academy.

"The need for an organization like NADME is long overdue," added academy Vice President Peter Van Beek, a former vice president for safety at Coach USA.

Van Beek developed the organization's initial training program and certification examination together with doctors Jeffrey Liva of Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York

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First Transit wins contract to operate DC Circulator

WASHINGTON — First Transit Inc., the nation's largest private provider of municipal transit services, has been awarded the contract to operate the controversial DC Circulator service in Washington.

The three-year, \$16 million contract was put out for competitive bids earlier this year after a big

stink was raised over the proposed service and its potential to severely undermine privately owned visitor shuttles operating among Washington landmarks.

In planning the circulator, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority paid scant attention to the impact it would have on

the private shuttle operators and made no effort to involve them in developing the service, a requirement of federal transit law.

Protests and the threat of a lawsuit, plus pressure from Congress, the United Motorcoach Association and the American Bus Association, resulted in WMATA putting the

service out to bid in January. First Transit was the winning bidder.

The circulator, which could begin as early as next month, will operate on frequent headways along two routes serving Union Station, Georgetown, the Convention Center, the Marina area and points along the routes.

To provide the service, First Transit will operate 29 Van Hool A330 transit buses that WMATA

bought for about \$12 million from AC Transit in Oakland, Calif. The stylish, 40-foot, low-floor coaches seat 55, have three passenger doors, and feature large side windows.

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Canadian company picks up pieces of Versyss failure

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — The collapse of bus industry software supplier Versyss Commercial Systems has scores of operators worried about long-term product support and others wondering if they've lost money they sunk into software Versyss had under development.

Much of the grief has been focused on a Canadian software company called Enghouse Systems Limited that purchased some of the transportation-related assets of Versyss in February.

Executives with Enghouse say

they are still trying to digest the acquisition and work through problems created by Versyss, including dealing with issues it has no legal obligation to tackle because of the limited nature of its purchase.

As often happens in the software industry, Enghouse agreed to buy Versyss' technology, it didn't agree to buy its blunders or baggage. Still, Enghouse has been forced to do significant damage control.

"We acquired selected assets," said Enghouse Executive Vice

President Neil Shafran. "We've started anew. We are helping and working with their existing customers even though we are not obliged to. ... We're trying to build a decent business."

Shafran said employees are attempting to meet with or call Versyss customers — one at a time — to deal with problems and allay concerns. But that may not necessarily be good news for all. Versyss' biggest customers were public transit systems — New York City Transit being a prime exam-

ple, meaning small coach companies could wait awhile before getting any sort of personal attention.

Enghouse has created a new unit, called TransSched Systems Limited, to manage the assets it acquired from Versyss. One former Versyss staff member said most former employees of Versyss' bus software division were offered jobs with Enghouse. Long-time industry software executive Margie Sellers has been put in charge of pulling the private-sector business of TransSched together.

"Things are going to be different" with Enghouse, said one former Versyss employee.

A key issue for Enghouse is sorting out the people it inherited, and putting them in the right spots. In two critical areas, customer support and research and development, Enghouse has installed its own employees in the top spots for TransSched, said Shafran.

Meanwhile, Versyss' competitors are moving into the void. One competing software maker reports

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Pennsylvania coach operators win Philly regulatory fight

PHILADELPHIA — Pennsylvania motorcoach companies appear to have stopped the Philadelphia Parking Authority from attempting to regulate their operations, including imposing an annual registration fee of \$1,000 per bus.

At a meeting last month, an official with the parking authority told a small group of operators and representatives from the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau that the authority will not enforce the bus-related provisions of a new state law that mandated it

to regulate taxis, limousines and certain buses.

The law granting the new authority to PPA was passed last year by the Pennsylvania legislature. The measure was in the form of an amendment to the state municipal code and escaped the notice of individuals and groups who monitor the legislature for Pennsylvania coach operators.

When the parking authority began making noises about enforcing the law, which took effect April 1, the Pennsylvania Bus Associa-

tion and individual operators rose up in arms. A suit was filed by three operators and the association in federal court challenging the law.

For a large regional operator like The Martz Group of Wilkes-Barre, Pa., the law would have cost the company \$80,000 a year, according to Ted Patton, a vice president at Martz.

For Philadelphia's largest coach operator, David Thomas Tours, it would have cost \$14,000 annually.

The draconian law transferred oversight of bus, limousine and taxi

services operating in Philadelphia County from the state Public Utility Commission to the parking authority. That change, which only affected Philadelphia, gave the parking authority wide latitude in setting operating conditions and fees.

Among several things, the law requires operators to make their buses available for inspection by the PPA, submit equipment lists, and provide information regarding any criminal record of the owners. In addition, drivers would have to be certified, and yearly fees would have to be paid.

The law applies only to passenger vehicles that transport customers within Philadelphia County limits, such as shuttle services from the Philadelphia airport or convention center to local hotels. It does not impact transport into the city from outside areas, or trips originating in Philadelphia and ending elsewhere.

And although the legislation was aimed primarily at limousines, charter buses were included in the classification.

"I think it started out to get

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THE DOCKET

FMCSA retools rule for dealing with its actions

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration is revising the rules governing its procedures when a motor carrier gets in trouble and wants to contest the agency's actions or findings.

A 19-page notice published in the *Federal Register* last month details changes to the rule that go into effect Nov. 14.

Motorcoach operators that keep their noses clean and don't get sideways with the FMCSA aren't likely to ever need the rule.

However, the rule could turn out to be super important to an operator that runs afoul of federal motor carrier safety regulations and wants to contest a FMCSA compliance or enforcement action.

Generally, the FMCSA says the changes are designed to increase the efficiency of its procedures, enhance due process, increase awareness of its procedures, and accommodate recent changes to various FMCSA programs.

The rule changes cover everything from settlement agreements to the rights of parties subject to an FMCSA complaint, and from the filing of documents to the use of administrative law judges.

For more information, see *Federal Register* Volume 17, No. 95, page 28467.

Or, additional information is available by contacting Jackie K. Cho, Office of Chief Counsel, FMCSA, 400 Seventh Street SW, Washington, DC 20590. Or, call (202) 366-0834.

Fee for code raised

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The National Motor Freight Traffic Association has bumped up the Standard Carrier Alpha Code assignment fee effective June 1.

The fee to obtain an alpha code, which is required of coach operators doing business with the U.S. Department of Defense, has been increased to \$35 from \$32. The amount is \$43 U.S. funds if the check is payable through a Canadian bank, up from \$38.

For a renewal, the new U.S. fee is \$33, versus \$29 previously.

The association also has adopted a revised Standard Carrier Alpha Code application form that can be downloaded from its Web site, www.nmfia.org.

Feds bus crash study is off to slow start

HUDSON COUNTY, N.J. — A long-delayed federal study into the causes of serious bus and motorcoach accidents has gotten off to a sluggish start.

The Bus Crash Causation Study that began in January went for weeks without gathering any information because there were no accidents in the limited target area — the state of New Jersey.

"We are certainly dependent on the availability of data and the good news is that the study was late because there were no bus crashes to report on," noted Bill MacLeod, spokesman for the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, which is conducting the yearlong study.

The possibility that limiting the study area to a single state would produce too few crashes to make the review meaningful was a major concern the United Motorcoach Association raised with the FMCSA during a comment period earlier this year.

Despite the slow beginning, the FMCSA officials maintain that conducting the study in New Jersey is the right move because historically the state has enough bus and motorcoach accidents to provide

If the agency wants to avoid the same criticisms that have been lodged against the Large Truck Crash Causation Study, it will revise its approach...

researchers with sufficient data to reach reliable conclusions on the causes of bus crashes.

MacLeod said the state also offers a wide range of bus operations — private church transportation, commuter runs, inner-city transit, and professional motorcoach tours and charters among them — that will add valuable input to the study.

"We see New Jersey as having a good mix of types of bus operations, which is essential to the study, and we also anticipate we will have enough different kinds of crashes to report on to make this a

worthwhile study," he added.

Federal researchers also plan to mine accident databases and examine insurance data for information on past accidents, as well as evaluate 50 to 100 "serious" bus accidents they anticipate will occur in New Jersey during 2005. The review of the new accidents will include a look at possible causation indicators such as a carrier having high numbers of previous accidents, moving violations and out-of-service safety infractions.

UMA not only contended in its filing with the government that the study findings will be questionable because of the limited study area, but it also maintained that the conclusions would be skewed further because of New Jersey's robust bus safety enforcement program.

"This fact is well known by bus companies, and as such they are aware they are likely to be reviewed at some point by New Jersey officials," UMA Senior Vice President Norm Littler wrote in a filing with the FMCSA. "It has been UMA's experience that states that employ strict bus enforcement programs are the least likely jurisdictions to have high crash occurrences."

UMA suggested the study be broadened to include all states and that researchers pay close attention to the differences in accidents in states with aggressive enforcement programs and those with weak or nonexistent programs.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and the Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety also complained to the FMCSA about the study methods.

"If the agency wants to avoid the same criticisms that have been lodged against the Large Truck Crash Causation Study, it will revise its approach to the Bus Crash Causation Study from the ground up or face another rejection by peer review groups and safety organizations of the acceptability of this misuse of federal funds," charged Gerald Donadson, senior research director for Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety.

FMCSA said the study is costing \$450,000.

The truck and bus crash studies were mandated by the Motor Carrier Safety Improvement Act of 1999. The truck study is due to be completed any time, while the bus study is to be finished next year.

Inside look at FMCSA study of bus crashes

WASHINGTON — The Motor Carrier Safety Improvement Act of 1999, which created the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, required the new agency to conduct a Bus Crash Causation Study.

Obviously, since it took nearly six years to get the study launched, it did not have a high priority as the agency was getting up and running. Finally, last September, the FMCSA announced its plan for the study. Here are the updated particulars:

Goal: To determine the reasons for — and factors contributing to — serious bus crashes.

Background: No national database exists that contains information describing the causes of or factors contributing to bus crashes. Without this type of data, the FMCSA says that it and the states have difficulty implementing effective countermeasures to reduce the occurrence and severity of these crashes.

The \$450,000 study is being divided into three parts:

1. Collect extensive data on a sample of crashes. This "major part

of the study" will include:

- Design of data collection instruments
- Plan for immediate notification of crashes and data collection at the crash scene
- One year of crash data collection on 50-100 crashes of all buses with seats for 9 or more people (excluding school and NJ Transit buses) in New Jersey, primarily Hudson County
- Quality review of crash data collected
- Coding of causes and contributing factors for crashes
- Development of study database that will be available to the public
- Draft reports on study results

2. Mine Current Databases. The following databases will be reviewed for relevant data: Fatality Analysis Reporting System, Buses Involved in Fatal Accidents, General Estimates System, Motor Carrier Management Information System Crash File, Crashworthiness Data System, and National Transportation Safety Board.

3. Evaluate Insurance Data.

FMCSA personnel will visit one or more insurance companies to assess the quality, quantity, and usefulness of bus crash causation data.

Field Data

FMCSA says that collecting and analyzing a representative *national* sample of commercial bus crashes would be cost prohibitive. Therefore, FMCSA has chosen an alternative approach that it says will prove equally effective.

Field data collection will take place this year in New Jersey. Using FMCSA contractors, New Jersey State Police and New Jersey Department of Transportation personnel, an extensive amount of data will be collected on 50-100 crashes representing all types of buses, except school and NJ Transit buses.

New Jersey was chosen "as the ideal site" for data collection for several reasons: The high volume and wide variety of bus traffic; a high level of interest in bus crashes expressed by federal, state and local government officials; an

excellent state bus safety program, and FMCSA field personnel with extensive bus industry expertise.

Milestones

This year:

1. Data Collection on 50-100 crashes. In Hudson County, and possibly other northeastern New Jersey counties, all fatal and injury crashes will be investigated. In all other New Jersey counties, only fatal crashes will be covered. Data quality review and crash case coding will begin.

2. Mine current crash databases.
3. Evaluate insurance industry bus crash data.

2006: Finish quality review and final coding; develop and disseminate study database; draft initial report on study results.

2007 and beyond: Continue data analysis of bus crash causation database.

Study Team: Project managers: Ralph Craft, e-mail ralph.craft@fmcsa.dot.gov and Wesley Barber, e-mail wesley.barber@fmcsa.dot.gov.

U.S. Air Force defends using transit buses for show

ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE, Md. — The U.S. Air Force says security was the overarching reason why it contracted to use buses supplied by the public transit agency in Washington to shuttle visitors to the base for on open house last month.

The American Bus Association protested the plan, accusing the Air

Force of ignoring federal charter service rules and attempting to get around them by contracting with a Florida company that hired the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority to supply 300 buses.

(See May 1 issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Under its arrangement with the

Air Force, National Parking and Transportation of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., subcontracted with WMATA to provide the shuttle service on May 20-22, for what is the largest air show staged by the Department of Defense.

In a letter to the ABA, Major Derek Bonenclark said the Air Force was forced to use WMATA

for the shuttle service because its buses are the only ones that can gain access to the Branch Avenue Metro light-rail station that would be used by thousands of people attending the show.

“Security requirements are a paramount concern” for the show, said Bonenclark.

And because WMATA buses

are the only ones with clearance to enter Metro stations, “the government mandated in its specification that WMATA perform as the subcontractor.”

Considering security requirements of Metro stations, as well as military installations, the Air Force “fulfilled all federal procurement regulations,” Bonenclark added.

More states offer traffic alerts by net

The Connecticut Department of Transportation has launched a statewide electronic highway traffic and rail incident notification system. The service is available free via e-mail.

“This new service allows anyone who drives or rides the rails in Connecticut . . . to ‘know before they go,’” said Gov. Jodi Rell. “It will make our transportation system work better and allow traffic to flow more smoothly by providing ‘real-time’ information about congestion spots.”

Users can sign up for the service by going to the “Traffic Incidents” and “Register to Receive E-Traffic Alerts,” sections of CDOT’s home page, www.ct.gov/dot.

In Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation has launched an online construction map designed to help highway users pinpoint delays on interstates and other major routes throughout the state.

“To help with travel planning, we encourage motorists to visit our online construction map and find the locations where travel delays may exist so they can plan accordingly,” said Transportation Secretary Allen Biehler.

The maps can be found in the state’s Web site, www.state.pa.us, by typing the keyword “construction,” or at PennDOT’s Web site, www.dot.state.pa.us, in the “Statewide Construction Map” link.

Visa okayed for Florida tickets

TALLALHASSEE, Fla. — Florida DOT has announced a new system that allows motor carriers to pay some fines by credit card.

Florida Department of Transportation said it instituted the program for carriers issued over-weight and safety-inspection citations.

Carriers may use any of a variety of credit cards to pay either online, at www.dot.state.fl.us/mcco, or over the phone, by calling (800) 688-5479.

For more information, contact Lt. Jeff Frost at F-DOT at (850) 245-7908, or by e-mail at jeff.frost@dot.state.fl.us.

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FMCSA Meeting

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national registry of medical examiners to be maintained by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Although Congress has been unable to get the highway and public transit bill passed, the FMCSA decided it wanted to get out front on the issue and scheduled the public meeting on the 22nd in Arlington, Va.

The federal government first considered certifying examiners to perform medical examinations for over-the-road bus and truck drivers more than 25 years ago. But from 1978, when the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration commissioned a feasibility study on the issue, until Mother's Day 1999, the concept didn't gain much traction.

The significance of Mother's Day 1999, was the Custom Bus Charters' crash near New Orleans, where more than 20 people died. The investigation of the crash revealed the driver of the bus had several life-threatening medical conditions. Yet, a doctor had signed off on the driver's physical exam, allowing him to drive.

After that, UMA, ABA and others began pushing for medical examiner certification and an approved provider list.

The FMCSA meeting will begin at 9 a.m. at the Crystal City Marriott Hotel, 1999 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington. For more information, go to www.nrcme.fmcsa.dot.gov.

Or, contact Dr. Mary D. Gunnels, Office of Bus and Truck Standards and Operations, Physical Qualifications Division, FMCSA, at (202) 366-4001.

Certification

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City and William Nassetta of Washington.

"I am absolutely confident the NADME training and certification will contribute greatly to the lowering of medically-related accidents and injuries on highways," Van Beek said.

Hirsch, an attorney, also is president and CEO of RH & Associates, and a specialist in motor carrier safety laws and regulations, drug and alcohol testing, and employment law. He is the former president of the Truckload Carriers Association, and a former associate general counsel of the American Trucking Associations.

Van Beek is president and CEO of DDC USA Fleet.com, which markets Web-based training programs for fleet drivers, and is a specialist in occupational safety and health.

The other principal is Jack Selter, the organization's executive director. Selter also is director of the Center for Integrated Transportation Safety and Security, and a specialist in the use of simulation and other tools to enhance highway safety. He previ-

DC Circulator

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"First Transit is honored to have been selected by WMATA for this important service in our nation's capital," said Mike Murray, president of First Transit. "We are extremely pleased to have WMATA and the District of Columbia as a customer, as WMATA is considered one of the premier transit authorities

ously was director of the Center for Advanced Transportation System Simulation at the University of Central Florida.

The trio has recruited a group of medical professionals to its board of directors.

Initially, the academy is focusing on what it sees as three critical activities:

- Providing national standards and training materials for the initial and recurrent training of medical practitioners who perform the required physical examinations to ensure they know and understand exactly what is necessary for a driver to be considered "physically qualified."

- Administering a national standardized examination to determine and certify the knowledge and proficiency of individual medical practitioners to increase and ensure full compliance with the physical examination requirements.

- Compile and maintain an up-to-date registry of individual medical examiners who have been certified or recertified by NADME that will be accessible to the public.

"Receipt of NADME certification represents the highest professional credential in the field and denotes the mark of a medical pro-

fessional who is committed to the safety of drivers and the public on our nation's highways," said Hirsch.

Norm Littler, long-time motorcoach industry lobbyist/advocate and recognized safety specialist, said he is delighted with the establishment of NADME. Noting that legislation pending in Congress would require every medical examiner to register and be listed as a condition of being eligible to perform a driver physical examination, Littler said "this is something that our association has been working hard to get for a number of years now. The fact that the private sector has stepped up with this more comprehensive program on its own is significant and should be applauded.

"Certification programs like NADME's are one of those areas in which the private sector can more easily and quickly provide a much-needed public service than the government and avoid the need for government to divert already limited funds away from programs that only government can, or should, deliver," Littler added.

For more information, go to www.nadme.org.

in the United States."

First Transit is a unit of First Group America, the U.S. subsidiary of British-based First Group PLC. It manages and operates more than 115 contracts with public transit agencies in 26 states, including 10 public transit systems in metropolitan Washington.

First Transit traces its roots to 1955, when it was founded as American Transportation Enterprises. In 1986, Ryder acquired what had become ATE Management & Services Co. to form Ryder/ATE. Seven years later, Ryder Student Transportation Services and Ryder/ATE combined to form Ryder Public Transportation Services.

In 1999, First Group PLC acquired Ryder Public Transportation Services, creating First Transit. London-based First Group was part

of the so-called British invasion of the U.S. bus industry in the late 1990s.

When WMATA announced the proposed circulator a little over a year ago, it touched off a firestorm of criticism in the motorcoach and private bus industry. (See June 1, June 15, and July 15, 2004, and Jan. 15, 2005, issues of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

A major focus of the criticism was the threat posed to the three private tour services that carry millions of riders annually between attractions throughout the Washington area.

Last September, a hearing in the U.S. House of Representatives turned a congressional spotlight on the proposal. That pressure and the possibility of a lawsuit apparently prompted officials at WMATA to rethink their idea and put the proposal out for bid.

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Delay may help

It's not often the U.S. Congress hands charter bus operators a gift. But it did last month when it failed — once again — to pass the giant highway and public transportation reauthorization bill.

Because Congress couldn't get its act together in time to avoid another extension, it created an opening for industry lobbyists to get together with representatives from the American Public Transportation Association to try to deal with the issue of charter service rules.

Lobbyists for the private coach and school bus industries got a scare early in May following the U.S. Senate's approval of the six-year highway bill. For several days thereafter it appeared the bill was finally on track to be passed after six failed attempts in the past 20 months.

Logic would suggest that the prospect of getting a new highway bill after such a long wait would seem like a good idea. The problem is the House-passed version of the bill contains a provision that is potentially lethal to the motorcoach and school bus industries.

There is report language attached to the House bill that would require the Federal Transit Administration to initiate a rulemaking regarding public transit agencies providing charter bus service.

Members of the Coalition of Private Transportation Associations are united in their belief that if the FTA is permitted to craft new charter service rules it will open the flood gates to transit agencies providing charter service of every sort, and possibly school bus service. There won't be a wedding party, school field trip and sports team, or senior group left in America that will need to hire a private bus company. They'll be able to call their local transit agency where they will find a willing charter service provider, probably at a financial loss or at some artificial breakeven point in

order to encourage favorable public opinion and build its stakeholder base.

So, with Congress seemingly poised to rush through the highway bill, the motorcoach industry lobby was worried the House provision with its rulemaking provision would become the law of the land before they could meet with APTA.

Earlier this year, members of the coalition and APTA met to try to reach a compromise that both sides could live with, take to Congress, and ask to be inserted in place of the current disputed language.

Those efforts failed and resulted in a testy public exchange between two of the principals involved in the fight.

Now, with the bill delayed, the window has opened again on new negotiations.

But while that window was opening, another was being closed. The chairmanship of the conference committee that will try to resolve differences between the House and Senate versions of the highway legislation and attempt to craft a bill President Bush won't veto, has been shifted back to the House of Representatives.

Rep. Don Young, R-Alaska, chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, will chair the new conference committee. Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, chaired the conference committee last year. While he had hoped to continue as chairman for this year's conference, House and Senate leaders agreed to Young's assertion that the chair should be rotated to the House.

Here's the problem: A key staff member, who appears to think the sun rises and sets in the parking lots of public transit agencies, will have a great deal more influence than during last year's conference. And that is not good news for the coach industry. Stay tuned.

Dot Travel: Is it for you?

New Web domain could increase business reach

The internet visibility of the travel industry is getting a boost late this year with the creation of a new Web-address extension that will only be available to companies and organizations operating in the industry.

Instead of having a Web address that ends in .com or .net, a motorcoach or other travel company could have an internet address that ends in .travel.

Members of the United Motorcoach Association, American Bus Association, and the National Tour Association are among the first companies being allowed to reserve a Web name with a .travel extension.

In other words, if you operated a coach company called Holiday Bus, you could have a Web address like *www.holidaybus.travel*, instead of or in addition to *www.holidaybus.com*.

Proponents of the service say that having a .travel domain name tells Web users "that you are a verified business or organization operating in the travel industry. No other domain name offers that assurance to your industry partners or to consumers."

Additionally, "consumers can have greater confidence purchasing travel over the internet through .travel Web sites," proponents add.

Unlike other domain names like .com or .net, .travel domains will be available only to travel companies and organizations that prove they are bonafide members of the travel industry. Because of this restriction, the process for securing a .travel name is different than buying a .com or .net domain name.

Before a company may purchase a .travel name, it must be "authenticated" by a participating travel association, like UMA, ABA or NTA. A .travel domain name may be registered for one to 10 years, and it is expected to cost \$95-\$100 annually.

As a free service to their members, UMA, ABA and NTA will begin offering what is called "pre-authentication" later this month or early next month. This pre-authentication period is expected to last 60 days.

Then, a .travel name will be available for actual purchase by association members that have been pre-authenticated. This period is called "limited launch" and is expected to last from Sept. 1 through Nov. 30.

The pre-authentication period benefits association members because on Dec. 1, any company or organization can apply for a .travel name as long as it can be verified as being in the travel industry.

It's possible these deadlines will change as details of the launch are worked out.

Coach operators interested in signing up for a .travel domain name should visit the Web site of the association they are a member of and look for the .travel information. All three associations have posted announcements explaining their procedures.

Companies can pre-authenticate their business name, service mark, trade mark, acronyms, doing business as name, marketing slogan, or current Web address.

Companies seeking to register a name should be aware that other travel businesses and organizations may also be eligible or seek to register the same name that they are eligible for. Final registration of any name is on a first-come-first-served basis.

Once a company has been pre-authenticated by an association, an e-mail confirmation will be sent containing what is called a "unique identifying number," which proves that a company has been pre-authenticated and is eligible to purchase a .travel domain name.

Companies can then visit the Web site of a domain name registrar that is approved by .travel to research the availability of the name it wants and to purchase it. There will be two or three online registrars approved to sell .travel domain names.

On the registrar's Web site, companies will be able to select the name or names they want, enter contact information required by the registrar, provide simplified name selection data and wait online. The registrar will check the information provided against the pre-authentication data entered through the company's association to determine if the name requested complies with the .travel naming rules. This all is expected to happen within seconds.

If everything checks out, companies will be asked to pay for their domain name with a credit card and the name or names they select will be placed in a .travel internet directory.

At this point, the .travel name will be available within 24-48 hours for a company to set up its ISP information and start directing Internet users to its Web site. Companies can have multiple names for a single Web site.

For example, *www.NTAonline.com* and *www.NTA.travel* may point to the same Web site. Companies likely will want to keep their established internet address for some time after purchasing a .travel domain.

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Operator asks state officials to stop ignoring buses

GALLOWAY, N.J. — Far too often, the intercity bus industry is overlooked by transportation planners seeking solutions to congested highways, the president of a New Hampshire line-run company told an important group of state officials here last month.

The fact is, said Jim Jalbert, president of C&J Trailways of Portsmouth, N.H., scheduled motorcoach service is the most cost-effective and flexible form of passenger transportation.

Jalbert made his remarks at a meeting of the board of directors of the American Association of Highway and Transportation Officials. AASHTO represents highway and transportation departments in all 50 states, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Noting that intercity bus carriers serve thousands of communities across the U.S., Jalbert said they provide their service with the lowest subsidy rate of any mode of transportation — less than one cent per passenger mile, compared to subsidies in excess of 14 cents per mile for other travel modes.

Motorcoaches also are safe, environmentally friendly and have the capacity to remove more than 200 million vehicles from our

nation's highways each year, Jalbert told state DOT directors and other officials attending the meeting.

Yet, with all the positive effects of motorcoaches, intercity bus are the one transportation option that is far too often overlooked, according to Jalbert. "In many cases, transportation planners opt for more

costly environmental mitigation strategies such as more passenger rail service," he said.

During his speech, Jalbert highlighted successful public/private passenger transportation projects in New Hampshire, including intermodal facilities in Concord and Portsmouth.

These projects happened, he said "with little investment on the government's part. These facilities are not mega-projects that amount to hundreds of millions of federal or state dollars.

"It takes less than \$10 million to build one of these facilities and, at that rate, we can begin to build a

network of facilities nationwide."

Jalbert, a member of the executive committee of the American Bus Association, urged his audience to get to know the intercity bus companies operating in their areas, and to make sure their planners consider the industry when developing projects.

Trailways adds member No. 70

FAIRFAX, Va. — AmericanStar Trailways of Pismo Beach, Calif., has become the 70th member of the Trailways Transportation System, coinciding with Trailways' 70th year of operation.

"Seventy in our 70s is certainly something to celebrate," said Trailways president, Gale Ellsworth. "As we mark seven decades as one of North America's transportation icons, we are pleased to count 70 quality independent member-companies in our growing Team Trailways family."

AmericanStar Trailways is a family-owned and operated company that was founded 14 years ago. Trudy Dockerty is president; Bob Dockerty is vice president-operations, and the couple employs several other family members among its staff of 48. The company operates a fleet of 10 motorcoaches and 10 school buses.

Bob Dockerty said the company business, especially military transport business, is booming in its central California region. AmericanStar also provides feeder service between San Francisco and Santa Barbara for AMTRAK. School and college sports teams use the company's charter services, and it offers tours of western states.

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'Going small' diversifies business of two operators

There is no shortage of changes motorcoach companies are making to cope with shifting customer demographics and business conditions, among them fleet and bus resizing, service diversification and seeking contract work.

Operators in Wisconsin and Maine appear to have successfully adapted two of those elements: Buying a different type of bus to provide a different type of service.

Progressive Travel in Spencer, Wis., added a Dodge Sprinter shuttle last September to support a county contract to transport developmentally challenged individuals between their jobs and homes.

Mermaid Transportation, a shuttle and charter company based in Portland, Maine, also is using a new Sprinter to provide shuttle service for senior citizens and people with disabilities.

Progressive is a 50-year-old family-owned and managed company that operates four motorcoaches and three midsize buses, in addition to its Sprinter. Plus, the Burnett family has 30 school buses.

Besides transporting disabled individuals, Progressive also uses its Sprinter to provide transportation for schools and special events, including weddings, theater outings and day trips.

The shuttle, which was customized by DaimlerChrysler Commercial Buses, has 12 Freedman

seats and features a dual panel, outward opening door that has 36-inch wide clearance for quicker boarding and easier accessibility.

"The single greatest factor in buying (the Sprinter) was the commercial bus door," said Joe Burnett, president of Progressive. "Several of our clients had difficulty using a sliding door. Some have physical limitations too, but this bus is much easier to board with the door and step well."

Because of the extreme Wisconsin winters, Progressive ordered additional under-seat heating to ensure greater customer comfort. "This past winter we had temperatures as low as 25 degrees below zero, and the heater and mechanical systems still ran," Burnett said. "The extra heating unit definitely served its purpose of keeping the interior and our passengers warm."

Burnett said he found DaimlerChrysler Commercial Buses extremely willing "to look at our specific needs" and customize the Sprinter accordingly. The winter package that DCCB developed for Progressive also included additional insulation, special heater hoses and stronger blower fans. "It worked out slick," he said.

Progressive's Sprinter has a Mercedes-Benz diesel engine and 5-speed automatic transmission.

Burnett purchased the Sprinter directly from DCCB. "It really

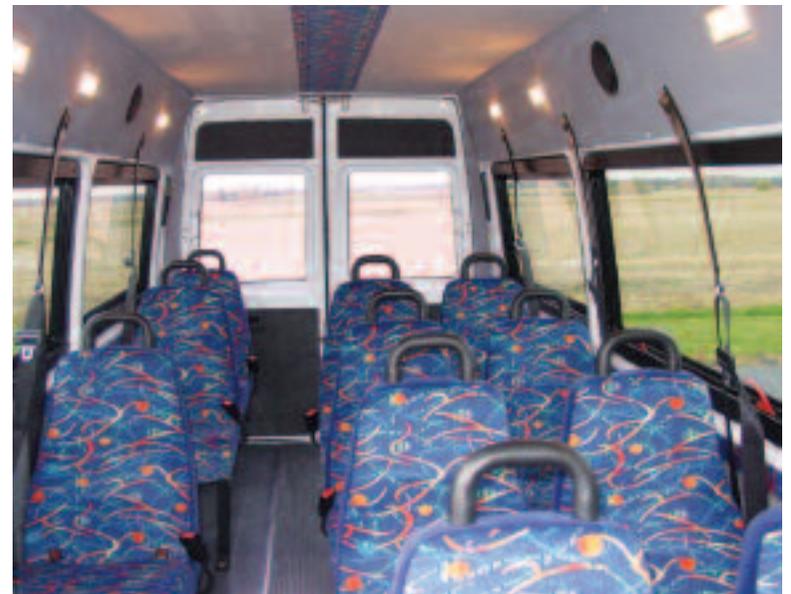


makes a difference to deal directly with the manufacturer. Any minor problem we've had with the bus has been handled well," he noted.

The customized Sprinter used by Mermaid Transportation features a wheelchair lift and fold-away seats that permit two wheelchair positions in use, and seven passengers with the wheelchair positions occupied.

"Transportation for passengers with disabilities is a major concern that continues to grow," said Steve Klein, president of Mermaid. "We initially started transporting people with disabilities as part of a corporate contract with an insurance company to transport their employees to work. That gave us the impetus to get started. Then we saw that a significant need exists for this service in both the private and corporate sectors."

Until the purchase of the Sprinter, Mermaid had only one



vehicle customized for the service. It was a continuing concern that the company did not have a backup vehicle available for passengers who rely heavily on the service.

Mermaid also provides bus charter and airport shuttle services. It operates scheduled service from

Portland to Boston's Logan Airport and the airport in Manchester, N.H. Its shuttles serve four area colleges and universities.

For information about Mermaid Transportation, go to www.gomermaid.com. Progressive's Web address is www.progressivetravel.org.

Cutaways

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

coach, Brown says.

Jack Wigley, president of All Aboard America in Mesa, Ariz., agrees, noting that a midsize over-the-road coach would give operators flexibility in serving both large and small charter groups. "You can run a 45-foot coach on a trip that needs a 35 foot, but you can't do the reverse," he noted.

"We have definite market for midsize coaches, we get calls all of the time for them," said Charles Hill, president of Heartland Motor Coach Inc. in St. Joseph, Mo., who is awaiting delivery of a KK 38, Krystal Coach Inc.'s flagship midsize cutaway coach.

While operators and manufacturers agree that most cutaway buses don't have the same durability and comfort as full-size highway coaches, the newest premium models are winning over many doubters.

"From a customer's perspective they've worked out just fine, and

the smaller groups especially love them," said Brown, who now has six M1000 buses in his fleet and often uses them for long highway runs to Florida, Washington D.C., and Ohio.

Hill, who has had Krystal products in the past, said he especially likes the curb appeal of the KK 38 and is confident it will perform as well as it looks. "I have no qualms at all about taking it on long trips," he said, adding that highway charters were among the reasons he bought it.

Wigley said he has been pleased with the six M1000 buses he now uses for a commuter service in several New Mexico mountain communities. In fact, he plans to buy two new M1000s soon for the commuter service and then bring two of the used coaches to his home base in Arizona for regular charter work, including long highways runs.

Jeff Polzien, president of Red Carpet Charters in Oklahoma City, Okla., said he was pleasantly surprised at the performance of the M1000s in his fleet. "When we test

drove, our drivers found it handled beautifully," he said.

It's reactions like those that appear to be helping drive the surge in the sales of the cutaways.

Dane Cornell, executive vice president of ABC, said sales of the M1000 have risen each of the last three years and every one that comes off the line is already sold. "We're building 'just in time' as the demand is there," he added.

The company produced three a month in 2003, the first full year they were offered, and four a month in 2004. It is on a five-a-month pace this year. ABC introduced the model on Sept. 10, 2001, but pulled it back until March of 2002 because of the 9-11 terrorists attacks that turned the transportation industry upside down.

Cornell said the M1000 was designed to be a premier body-on-chassis midsize coach that could take to the highway with power and comfort. Its 102-inch width, upgraded engine and transmission, full-size coach seating, top-mounted air conditioner and extra wide

windshield all contribute, he said. The M1000 is built on a Freightliner chassis.

Gary Dolan, vice president of Krystal, said sales of the KK 38 had been running steady since it was introduced three years ago, but have shown a sharp increase in the past eight months. The KK 38 sells for about \$150,000 and the company produces in excess of 100 a year.

Built on an International chassis, it uses an upgraded engine and tires and wheels for highway driving and premium seats for passenger comfort. "We market it as close as you can get to a coach and still have a body on chassis," said Dolan.

Meantime, the major coach manufacturers continue to steer away from the 35-foot-highway-bus idea because they don't believe the smaller models can be built for a price operators would be willing to pay.

"They are just too expensive, that's it," maintains Robert Foley chief executive of ABC Companies. "People say they want them, but they're not willing to pay for them."

He said the cost to the buyer could run as high as \$285,000 and it would be a stretch to get it down to the \$225,000 range, which might satisfy some operators who are in the market for midsize coaches. However, even the lower price would be a big jump from the \$140,000 to \$150,000 that manufacturers are getting for their top-of-the-line body on chassis buses.

Plus, most operators buying the cutaways appear to be generally happy with what they are getting for their money.

"I am very interesting in getting some more M1000 coaches," said Wigley. "I think they are a good compromise."

While Brown agrees that the premium cutaways are doing a good job on the road, he still would like to see someone market a true highway 35-foot coach. "I am not afraid to pay more for a regular short coach because there still is a very big demand for them," he said. (See Dec. 1, 2003, issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

People

Thomas Sorrells, president and CEO of **Motor Coach Industries**, has been elected to the board of the **Trailways Transportation System**, and will serve a three-year term.

Sorrells joined MCI four years ago as chief operating officer, and was named president in July 2001. He became chief executive in November 2003. Previously, he was vice president of business development for Fairfield Manufacturing Co., a manufacturer of gears, gear sets and power transmission assemblies.

Ron Cornell, president and CEO of **ABC Companies**, and *Patrick Scully*, president and CEO of **Setra of North America**, were re-elected to three-year board terms.

Jeanmarie Poole is the new chief of the Motor Carrier Passenger Security Branch within the Intermodal Program Office of the **Transportation Security Administration**. In other words, she's the top bus person at TSA. Her background includes three years at TSA in policy development, a year at the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, and 18 years at the National Transportation Safety Board.

Separately, President Bush has nominated *Edmund S. Hawley* to serve as assistant secretary of homeland security for the TSA, the top job at TSA. He would replace Rear Adm. David M. Stone who is leaving

this month. Hawley's appointment is subject to Senate confirmation.

Motor Coach Industries has promoted *Michael P. Melaniphy* to vice president of public sector. He succeeds *John Andrews*, who has retired after a 30-year career with the company.

In addition, *Louis Quaglia*, *Tom Wagner* and *Karen Honeysett* have joined the public sector division as business development managers. Quaglia, formerly a manager in MCI Fleet Support, will be responsible for East Coast accounts including Ontario and Quebec. Wagner, who joins MCI with a career in technology applications for transit and government agencies, will be responsible for the western region, including states west of the Mississippi River and western Canada. Honeysett, who has been with the company for 17 years, will provide internal support.

Melaniphy joined MCI as director of public sector sales for the western region in January 2001, eventually overseeing sales nationwide. His background includes a 12-year career with First Transit, where he served as a general manager in charge of transit systems in Charlotte, N.C.; Wichita, Kan.; Hamilton, Ohio, and Laredo, Texas.

Lancer Insurance Company of Long Beach, N.Y., has announced that Associate General Counsel *Shirley B. Ortego* has been named vice president and assistant secretary of the insurance group.

Thrashers honored for music career

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. — Jim Thrasher, president of Thrasher Brothers Trailways and the Alabama Motorcoach Association, has been inducted into the Alabama Music Hall of Fame, along with his brothers, Joe and Buddy.

A ceremony marking the induction was held at the Von Braun Convention Center in Huntsville.

Jim Thrasher and his brothers, widely known in gospel and country music as The Thrasher Brothers, fashioned a successful career that lasted more than 50 years. The trio began singing gospel when they

were 10, 8 and 6 years old. Their harmonies won them an appearance on the *Ted Mack Original Amateur Hour*, the *Star Search* or *American Idol* of the late 1940s and 1950s.

Their career highlights include the 1975 Song of the Year, *One Day at a Time (Sweet Jesus)*, and the theme song for the hit CBS-TV series *Simon and Simon*. In the 1960s and early 70s they had their own TV show, *America Sings*. Continental Trailways was a sponsor. In the early 1980s they had another big hit, *Still the One*.

In 1986, the brothers retired

after more than 30 years on the road. However, 10 years later they recorded one more album, their 32nd, called *Encore*. The album won them their fifth Grammy nomination.

For the induction ceremony, the brothers performed three songs, including their signature version of *Amazing Grace*, winning a standing ovation.

Contributing to this article was Ken Presley, vice president of Service Insurance Agency, a fan of the Thrashers and a motorcoach industry insurance broker for more than 20 years.

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Jefferson Lines Minneapolis

Jefferson Lines, a leading regional coach operator, has taken delivery of two MCI J4500 coaches.

The deliveries coincide with implementation of a new agreement between the Jefferson Lines and Amtrak. The agreement is for Amtrak Thruway coach service between Duluth and Hinkley, Minn., and Amtrak's daily Empire Builder train that stops in St. Paul.

Passengers using the service can board Jefferson Lines coaches at a stop in Hinkley, at the Duluth terminal or at the University of Minnesota-Duluth.

Jefferson Lines operates a fleet of 61 coaches, providing scheduled runs as well as charter and tour services. Its line-run operation extends from Minneapolis to Dallas, serving 11 heartland states, as well as the province of Manitoba.

The company's new J4500s are equipped with wheelchair lifts, Caterpillar C-13 engines and ZF AS-Tronic transmissions. The coaches also have Amaya Brazil seating for 56 passengers, six-monitor entertainment systems, and Carrier A/Cs.

Founded in 1919, Jefferson Lines is a family-run operation under the leadership of Charles Zelle, who recently finished a three-year term as president of the American Bus Association.

Stout's Charter Trenton, N.J.

Stout's Charter, which has been in an expansion mode for more than a year, continues to grow with the addition of four new Van Hool C2045 motorcoaches.

Last year, Stout's expanded its fleet with five new C2045s, plus it dedicated a new headquarters and maintenance center in the summer of 2004.

Founded in 1962 by Harry and Marion Stout, the company is now under the ownership of their son, Harry Stout III and his wife, Dena. Harry and Dena Stout's three sons, Timothy, Shawn, and Harry IV, all hold management positions in the company, which specializes in local and national tours, along with shuttle and contracted school bus services.

The school bus division transports more than 4,000 pupils daily for 12 school districts in central New Jersey.

Stout's new 8,500 square foot facility has 2,000 square feet of office space with the remainder used for maintenance. The shop is operated around the clock. The company also provides warranty repairs for International school buses and is an East Coast distributor and installer for REI school bus video surveillance systems.

Harry Stout III attributes the company's success and growth to having made service its No. 1 priority for employees – not only for the coaches they operate but also for every customer they come in contact with. "The Van Hool equipment is top quality," said Stout.

Two of the four 2005 C2045s in Stout's fleet are equipped with Detroit Diesel Series 60 engines, while



Stout family members Timothy, Harry III, Shawn and HJ, left to right, stand in front of the company's new headquarters.

the other two feature Caterpillar C13 engines. All four coaches were equipped with ZF AS-tronic transmissions. Other spec'd equipment includes driver Lexan partitions, Monogram flush toilets with supplemental restroom tank, DVD players, Intec backup cameras, and REI video system with four color monitors and radio. There are Amaya Brasil seats and Isringhausen air-adjustable driver seats.



Brewster Transportation Banff, Alberta

Brewster Transportation and Tours, the largest sightseeing tour operator in the Canadian Rockies, has added five new Prevost H3-45s to its fleet. The coaches bring the total number of Prevost coaches in the 75-bus Brewster fleet to 37.

"We started doing business with Prevost in 1996, soon after it launched its new generation of H3-45 motorcoaches," said Lori Perlin, manager of marketing and communications at Brewster. "We were immediately

sold on these coaches, which offer immense curb appeal, a higher profile and a most innovative exterior design."

"Innovation and customer service make Prevost stand out from the rest. They were the first ones to come up with seamless windows," giving passengers unobstructed panoramic views of the Rockies, Perlin added.

Brewster's new Prevosts have Detroit Diesel Series 60 engines, ZF AS-tronic transmissions, Jake Brakes, Alcoa wheels, Michelin tires, five-monitor A/V systems, Amaya passenger seats and USSC driver seats.

The company has been offering its tourist services for 113 years.



TourCoach Charter Los Angeles

TourCoach Charter, a tour and charter operation, has added 10 Setra S 417 luxury motorcoaches to its fleet of 60 vehicles.

In addition, TourCoach is getting four more S 417 coaches to cater to its upscale customers. The company provides multi-day, nationwide tours, as well as local tours of Los Angeles and Hollywood.

"We really like the looks of the coach. The quality materials and decoration on the coach is evident, including the seating and

upholstery used," said Vahid Sapir, sales manager of TourCoach. "Many of our customers are European and familiar with the features and look of the Setra motorcoaches. The Setra name is well-recognized in Europe and has a strong reputation."

The TourCoach S 417s feature fully integrated multiplex electronics and on-board diagnostic systems, Series 60 Detroit Diesel engines and Allison B500 transmissions.

Established in 1994, TourCoach is a full-service tour and charter company with both full-size coaches and midsize buses in its fleet.

Its Web address is www.tourcoach.com.

Versyss

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

it has sold its system to two of Versyss largest customers.

Versyss started out life about 30 years ago as a medical software provider. At one point, it had more than 1,100 employees and offices in 26 locations. In the 1990s it changed hands at least twice, and late in the decade it diversified by expanding into construction, distribution, energy, municipal and transportation software.

For the motorcoach industry, it marketed business platform and tour management software. For

public transit agencies, it offered a more comprehensive line-up, including software for scheduling, driver management, automated telephone information, trip planning and dispatching, and financial and human resource management. It even offered software for demand-response operations.

Versyss claimed on its Web site that more than half of North America's largest coach companies were running their operations on its business platform software, and that includes a large number of International Motor Coach Group members.

Early in this decade, Versyss began development of new coach

industry software called Titan, billed as a next-generation graphical product. An unknown — but probably significant — number of operators paid advances toward Titan, which was promised for late 2003 but was constantly delayed. Some have come to question whether Titan ever was destined to be a real product.

Shafran says Titan is under development, but he declined to say when it is likely to be available or to totally commit to bringing the product to market. "We're still formulating our plans," he said. "What it looks like remains to be seen. . . . If we give a date (when a product is

going to be ready), we're going to stick to it, which is why we're not giving a date. We're working on it."

Apparently still up in the air is the issue of the money operators paid Versyss in advance of getting the Titan software. "Versyss promised everything and was unable to deliver," said a former Versyss employee who has joined Enghouse.

Shafran said the managers at Enghouse know how to run a software business, and the publicly owned company is considerably larger than was Versyss. Part of knowing how to run a software company, says Shafran, is knowing not to promise things you can't deliver.

A former Versyss employee describes the Enghouse team as "good business people. They're very upfront."

Enghouse had fiscal 2004 revenue of nearly \$61 million (Canadian) and net income of about \$12 million. The company has been around since 1984 and is based in Markham, Ont. Its shares trade on the Toronto Stock Exchange under the symbol ESL.

The first time the acquisition of Versyss will possibly impact Enghouse financial statements will be for its second fiscal quarter ended April 30, which it will report early this month.

National Interstate reports jump in income, premiums

RICHFIELD, OHIO — National Interstate Corporation has reported sharply higher earnings for the first quarter of 2005, reflecting improved results from operations and better returns on investments.

The diversified motorcoach industry insurer said it earned \$7.2 million, or 39 cents a share, during the first three months of this year. That was more than 43 percent

higher than the net income of \$5 million, or 32 cents a share, for the same period last year.

Gross premiums written for the first quarter of this year was \$103.6 million, up 16.5 percent from a year ago. Other first-quarter growth indicators include net premiums written and premiums earned, both up more than 30 percent this year compared to last.

National Interstate said much of its increased volume in the first quarter was attributable to growth in alternative risk transfer and specialty personal lines products.

Net investment income during the first quarter of '05 was \$2.7 million, up nearly 52 percent com-

pared to last year. The increase was largely due to having much more money to invest because of greater premium revenue and residuals from its initial public stock offering in February.

"All aspects of our business compared favorably to the prior

year," said National Interstate Chairman and President Alan Spachman. "We are pleased with our earnings and premium growth. We will continue to focus on maintaining our underwriting discipline through appropriate risk selection and adequate pricing."

Gray Lines in Texas are acquired by CUSA

DALLAS — CUSA, the largest charter and tour provider in the western U.S., has acquired the Gray Line licenses for virtually all of the major markets in Texas — Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston/Galveston, San Antonio and Austin. The seller was Greyhound Lines of Dallas.

"The Gray Line name is the most recognizable sightseeing brand name in the world," said Craig Lentzsch, CEO at CUSA. "Now, nearly all of our markets that have sightseeing services, or where sightseeing is currently being developed, will have the Gray Line license to help promote their business."

Brad Weber, president and CEO of Gray Line Worldwide, said his organization was "thrilled to have all the major markets for CUSA, as a licensee in our network of over

150 locations on six continents. CUSA has a strong commitment to the development of the Gray Line brand in its markets."

Since late last year, CUSA has focused much of its growth on expanding its sightseeing business in its gateway markets of Las Vegas, Phoenix, San Francisco and Anaheim, Calif. Early this year, it acquired the Gray Line of Anaheim, Los Angeles and San Diego licenses through its acquisition of Roesch Lines.

Last year, it acquired the licenses for Gray Line of Phoenix, Gray Line of Memphis and Gray Line of Portland.

CUSA, which generally does business as Coach USA in the cities where it operates, has facilities in 20 major markets and a fleet of more than 1,000 coaches.

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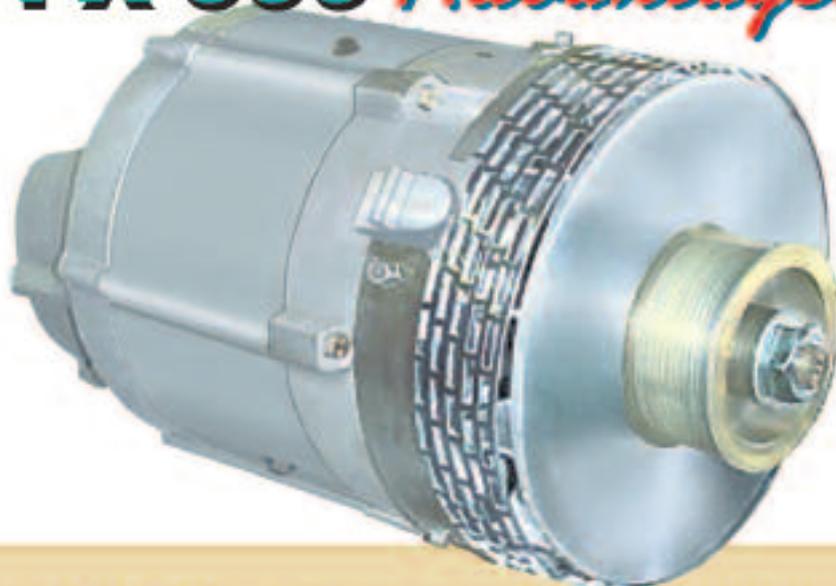
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Philadelphia

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

control of limousines and taxis. Before anyone was aware of it, buses got included in it," said Patton.

Right from the start, most coach operators decided not to comply with the law, said David Benedict, president of David Thomas Tours. "Nobody registered. There was a lot of resistance; no cooperation."

Despite the decision by the parking authority not to enforce the law against buses, Benedict says the

lawsuit challenging the legislation will proceed anyway.

He said operators fear that as long as the law remains on the books, another administration or group of bureaucrats could decide at some point to resurrect the issue.

The suit, filed in U.S. District Court for the middle district of Pennsylvania, claims the PPA is violating federal law that regulates charter bus transportation. It seeks to prohibit the parking authority from enforcing the regulations against buses.

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Roadcheck inspections start June 7

WASHINGTON — The Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance has announced that its 2005 Roadcheck will be June 7-9 in Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. This year's Roadcheck, the 18th annual such international motorcoach and truck safety and security inspection program, will last 72 hours.

The focus of the event will be motorcoach safety, the importance

of safety belts, and commercial vehicle security.

Roughly 9,000 state, provincial, local and federal truck and bus inspectors are expected to take part in Roadcheck 2005. They will check commercial vehicles and their drivers at about 1,000 inspection sites along major interstates, plus mobile patrols will be on duty on other highways and at alternate

locations.

Also this year, the Tire Retread Information Bureau will be participating, distributing handouts at nearly 70 locations. The flyers detail the importance of proper tire maintenance.

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

Driver course this month

PLEASANTVILLE, N.J. — The South Jersey Transportation Authority is sponsoring a bus driver safety training course this month.

Topics to be covered are:

- Fatigue: Causes, contributing factors and prevention

- Emergencies: How to handle emergency situations

- Security: Keeping you and your passengers safe and secure

The session will be from noon

to 3 p.m., Wednesday, June 22 at Wash's Catering Service on New Road in Pleasantville. The location is convenient to Atlantic City and a shuttle will operate from the Atlantic City Transportation Center Bus Parking Lot to Wash's.

Lunch and certificates will be provided to all attendees.

To reserve a seat, contact the authority by calling (609) 345-5572 Ext. 423, or (888) 565-7582

Attractions added to event

TORONTO — The Ontario Motor Coach Association is adding an Attraction Tradeshow to its annual Conference and Marketplace. The Toronto conference will be October 23-26.

Brian Crow, president of OMCA, said the attraction show is an opportunity to showcase attractions to tour operators prior to the

regular marketplace.

"OMCA tried out this concept two years ago and it was quite a success. The demand for it grew, so we have decided to bring it back and expand it," said Ann Belmoun, vice president of the association.

Information is available at www.omca.com.

June golf event to honor Dupuis

EAST HARTFORD, Conn. — Family and friends of long-time motorcoach operator Ray Dupuis have organized a charity golf event late this month to honor him.

The Raynald R. Dupuis Charity Golf Classic, benefiting the CT Children's Medical Center, will be June 24 at the Gillette Ridge Golf Club in Bloomfield, Conn. The event will use a shamle format with an after-lunch shotgun start and a dinner and award ceremony that evening.

The event recognizes Mr. Dupuis, former owner of The Arrow Line of East Hartford and a former UMA board member, who died last year. The Arrow Line is now part of Peter Pan Bus Lines.

For information, call Mitch Guralnick at (201) 245-8277 or e-mail him at Mitch.Guralnick@mcicoach.net.

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Calendar

JUNE 2005

- 3-4 Bus History Association 2005 Convention**, Comfort Inn Riverfront, Harrisburg, Pa. Info: (517) 977-0664.
- 6-7 Bus Industry Safety Council**, Adam's Mark Dallas, Dallas. Info: (202) 842-1645 or go to www.buses.org.
- 7 Greater New Jersey Motorcoach Association Annual Meeting**, Trump Taj Mahal, Atlantic City. Info: (856) 665-3200 or e-mail gnjma@lycos.com.
- 7-9 Roadcheck 2005**, annual CVSA roadside inspection program, across U.S. and Canada. Info: Go to www.cvsa.org.

NMN, Trailways unite forces for networking event

NORTH LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — The National Motorcoach Network and the charter and tour division of Trailways Transportation System are partnering for the network's annual Invitational 100 meeting here next month.

This marks the second consecutive year Trailways tour and charter operators have teamed with National Motorcoach Network members for the event. There are a combined 100 coach operators from the two organizations.

This year's program is being coordinated by the North Little Rock Visitors Bureau, with support from other major tourism groups in Arkansas. The meeting will be July 21-25 at the Wyndham Riverfront Hotel in North Little Rock.

The Invitational 100, which is entering its 22nd year, is traditionally one of the best-supported meetings in the travel industry. It is limited to a maximum of 100 supplier registrants, but there is no limit to the number of motorcoach charter-and-tour operators that can participate.

The event consists of business and networking sessions, social events and a familiarization tour.

"The Invitational 100 represents a true networking opportunity for all motorcoach charter-and-tour operators, and travel industry and associate suppliers," said Steve Kirchner of National Motorcoach Network. "The increase in the motorcoach tour operator participation through the active participation of Trailways will only enhance these networking opportunities for all participants."

For information, contact National Motorcoach Network at (888) 733-5287, or Trailways at (703) 691-3052, or go to www.motorcoach.com.

7-9 FedFleet 2005, Gaylord Opryland Hotel and Convention Center, Nashville, Tenn. Info: Go to www.fedfleet.org.

9 Museum of Bus Transportation Spring Fling, museum storage hanger, Myerstown, Pa. Info: (717) 566-7100 Ext. 119 or go to www.buseum.org.

24 Raynald R. Dupuis Charity Golf Classic, Gillette Ridge Golf Club, Bloomfield, Conn. Info: E-mail: Mitch.Guralnick@mcicoach.net.

Bus museum Spring Fling is June 9

HERSHEY, Pa. — The Museum of Bus Transportation's annual Spring Fling, a casual event that includes a bus memorabilia flea market, barbecue and display of vintage buses, will be Saturday, June 9.

The event, which starts at 9 a.m., is being held early this year to accommodate members of the Canadian Bus History Association who will be meeting in the area.

The fling will be at the museum's Myerstown, Pa., airplane hanger that has been converted to bus storage. The dozen restored buses kept in the hanger will be moved outside and put on display. A flea market will be set up inside the hanger.

Museum fleet manager Dan Lehman will operate a barbecue lunch, while a shuttle will operate

during the afternoon from the hanger to the museum in nearby Hershey. There will be a small fee to ride the shuttle.

The hanger is on the north side of State Route 422, one mile west of State Route 501. Watch for the buses and hangers.

For information, call (717) 566-7100 ext.119, or go to www.buseum.org.

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