

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

Feds award millions for bus security

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has awarded \$11.64 million to 39 motorcoach companies under the fiscal 2007 Intercity Bus Security Grant Program.

The amount of grant money being awarded this year is a significant increase from the previous two years. In fiscal 2006, \$9.5 million was awarded to 35 coach companies and in fiscal 2005, 25 grants totaling \$9.66 million were awarded. The reduced number of grants two years ago resulted from tougher restrictions on who could apply.

And, while more companies got more money this year, the total still represents only 1 percent of the private over-the-road bus operators in the U.S.

The '07 grants mark the fifth consecutive year the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has awarded money to private bus operators to make security improvements.

A total of \$60.53 million in taxpayer dollars have flowed from the federal treasury to 150 private operators during the past five years. However, more than 40 percent of that money has gone to one company — Greyhound Lines, which has received a total of \$24.54 million. Greyhound's fiscal '07 grant was for \$3.28 million.

Academy Express of Hoboken, N.J. and Peter Pan Lines of Springfield, Mass., have each received more than \$2.1 million during the past five years, with Academy awarded \$854,575 this year, and Peter Pan getting \$174,234.

As it has virtually every year, the Department of Homeland

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Website makeover pays dividends

Should you be thinking about upgrading?

DENVER — One year ago, Ramblin Express completed a makeover of its Website.

Then, earlier this spring, the tour, charter and shuttle operator made more Web upgrades, including improving its positioning on search engines without so-called pay-per-click advertising.

Today, additional "organic" improvements are in the works, plus the launch of a second Website, www.CasinoShuttle.com, aimed specifically at promoting its casino shuttle service in Colorado.

Coinciding with the launch of the new Website, the livery on the company's nine casino line-run coaches is being changed to CasinoShuttle.com on the sides and backs — instead of Ramblin Express.

To say Rambling Express President Todd Holland believes in the power of the Internet to market company motorcoach services is something of an understatement. Holland has become a true believer.

He says Ramblin Express is still getting strong results from the extensive Web makeover of a year ago. "We're averaging about a dozen new leads daily," he says.

The catalyst for Ramblin Express' Web-based marketing upgrade was something of an accident. Holland won a Webpage makeover from Motor Coach Industries at a meeting of the International Motorcoach Group.

2007 Roadcheck inspections scheduled for early June

The 20th annual Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance International Roadcheck will be June 5-7 — for 72 continuous hours — throughout the U.S. and Canada.

About 10,000 CVSA inspectors will be stationed along major



highways, on other roadways and at motorcoach destinations.

This year's enforcement and educational event is focusing on motorcoach safety, Level I inspections (driver and vehicle), and the importance of safety belts.

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Coach America to again handle bus evacuations

WASHINGTON — Coach America is close to sealing a second contract with the U.S. government that will again put it in charge of coordinating federal emergency bus evacuation services for the '07 hurricane season that begins today.

Negotiations with the U.S. Department of Transportation were expected to be completed by the end of May or early this month, according to Coach America Chief Executive Craig Lentzsch.

"It is highly likely that we will get it done in the next two weeks, but you just never know with government negotiations," he said.

The Dallas-based motorcoach company provided the services for the 2006 hurricane season under a \$32.5 million contract that contained an option for a second year. Although USDOT exercised the option, details of the planning, operations and amount of money were subject to negotiations.

USDOT sought a contract with an experienced motorcoach operator after being heavily criticized by the bus industry and others for the way it handled evacuation services in 2005 when deadly hurricanes struck Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas.

After Hurricane Katrina hit in late summer 2005, the federal government used a trucking logistics company to coordinate bus evacuations. The trucking outfit farmed the work out to other transportation businesses, including a national limousine service and two bus brokers. Dozens of motorcoach operators hired by the subcontractors had great difficulty getting paid for their work, some having to wait months to get their money.

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FLEET FORWARD TRANSPORT SOLUTIONS

Drop-off, parking changes in works for Capitol Mall; drivers getting \$50 tickets

WASHINGTON — Ongoing security concerns apparently are costing motorcoach operators that visit the Capitol Mall here their traditional passenger drop-off spots, plus a short-term parking area.

Drivers report being issued tickets from Capitol Police for discharging passengers in front of the national museums that line the mall, and for parking for short periods in an area adjacent to the American Indian Museum.

"They're getting \$50 tickets now," said Chuck Andrews of World Strides, the industry's largest operator of Washington D.C. tours for students.

He said police have told drivers that the only place they are allowed to drop-off passengers is in front of the Indian Museum, which is near the eastern end of the 1.9-mile-long mall.

He said drivers reported last month seeing as many as 30 police officers on foot, horseback and scooters issuing tickets in front of the museums on the mall.

A spokesman for the National Park Service acknowledges the agency has made changes to the passenger drop-off and parking regulations for motorcoaches, but he insisted he could not discuss details until he prepares an official news release, which he said could take several days.

"The changes were made for security reasons and I am sure people can understand that," said Bill Line, a public affairs officer for the Washington regional office of the Park Service.

Motorcoach drivers for years have been dropping off passengers in front of most of the museums and either staying there for a brief period while the passengers took

National Cathedral opens bus garage

WASHINGTON — The Washington National Cathedral, one of the most highly visited churches in North America, has opened an underground bus and auto parking garage — the first of its kind in the District of Columbia.

It provides parking for 18 buses, and is designed to alleviate traffic congestion and improve pedestrian safety.

Construction of the \$34 million project began two years ago.

Idling buses and cathedral access have long been problems

along Wisconsin Avenue. Buses bringing visitors to the church could only enter and exit onto the busy thoroughfare.

Cathedral officials say the improved conditions provided by the garage are a relief to many residents in surrounding neighborhoods.

Pedestrian safety also is enhanced because crosswalks and a traffic light have been added to Wisconsin Avenue. A green roof, adorned with plants and trees, covers the facility.

Nearly 180,000 Cathedral visitors arrive annually by bus. Ninety percent of the visitors are young people coming to Washington from across the country. Bus groups come for pre-arranged tours and to attend worship services.

In addition to bus parking, the facility features a driver lounge, gift shop, restrooms and security offices.

For more information, e-mail ParkingInfo@cathedral.org, or call (202) 537-5513.

pictures or leaving the area and parking elsewhere while the passengers visited the attractions. In addition, drivers have been using the parking near the Indian museum without any problems.

Andrews, whose company brings between 300,000 and 400,000 students to the mall a year, said the drop-off restrictions could make it difficult for the elderly or disabled to visit some of the museums because they are distant from the Indian museum.

For example, the Indian muse-

um is about one and one-half miles from the Museum of American History, which is one of the most popular stops on the mall and which is undergoing a major renovation.

He said some drivers have been told by mall police they could drop off passengers and park on Massachusetts Avenue, but the street is too busy and would be dangerous for school children.

"I don't think that would be a good street to use," he added.

Line was unable to say exactly why the Park Service made the changes without notifying the motorcoach industry, which brings hundreds of buses and thousands of visitors to the mall every day.

He noted, however, that regulations governing the mall are complicated and the large number of people who visit the mall — an estimated 25 million — every year make regulatory issues even more difficult.

"It's not like 'See Jane run, see Dick run,'" he said.



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THE DOCKET

Seatbelts on way to buses in Texas

AUSTIN — The Texas Senate has passed a bill that would require seatbelts on new school buses bought after Sept. 1, 2010, and on motorcoaches carrying Texas school children by 2011.

The legislation, which requires three-point seatbelts, was in direct response to a charter bus rollover in March 2006 that resulted in the death of two female high school soccer players.

The bill was passed unanimously.

"It is time to make this important commitment to our children," said the bill's sponsor, Sen. Eddie Lucio of Brownsville. "Today school buses are safe, but not safe enough. Buses have a higher center of gravity and are prone to roll over."

The bill does not require school districts to replace existing

buses but calls for school buses bought after Sept. 1, 2010, to be equipped with lap-shoulder seatbelts.

The requirement is contingent, however, on lawmakers finding the money to pay for the belts and related expenses. A fiscal note attached to the bill estimates the safety upgrades could cost nearly \$580 million in the 2011-12 budget year.

All school buses, including those chartered by school districts or city buses contracted to carry students, would need seatbelts by 2011. The deadline for belts in charter and transit buses had been 2014, but under an amendment presented by Sen. Dan Patrick of Houston it was moved up three years.

Patrick said that most accidents involving students appear to occur

in charter buses rather than district-owned buses.

On March 29, 2006, a charter bus transporting the West Brook High School girls' soccer team ran into a ditch and rolled over while dodging debris during a pounding rain. Two players died while others were seriously injured.

The bill now goes to the Texas House, which has passed its own version of the legislation. The House can either agree to the Senate amendments or recommend a joint committee to reconcile the bills.

Another Patrick amendment the Senate adopted requires better reporting of school bus accidents.

The Senate version also requires students riding in buses with seatbelts to wear them. School districts can enforce the rule by adopting disciplinary policies.

USDOT finally to act on loophole in federal substance-abuse rules

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Officials at the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration have belatedly — acknowledged a bus-size loophole in their substance abuse regulations and say they're trying to close it.

Although the loophole seemingly was common knowledge among safety experts in the bus and truck industry, executives in the drug testing industry, and many drivers, federal safety bureaucrats apparently ignored it for years.

Finally, professionals in the drug testing industry made it an issue and federal officials are at last reacting.

The problem deals with commercial vehicle drivers who violate federal substance abuse regulations and remain on the job.

"Industry professionals suspected that drivers were violating Part 40 of the rules and regulations, which deals with return to duty to perform safety-sensitive functions," said Dan Hartman, associate administrator of field operations for the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration in Washington. "They presented evidence to us that gave us an indication that government needs to look into this further."

To circumvent the rules, drug-using drivers would engage in a shell game where they tested positive at a collection facility, realized they wouldn't be hired by a particular bus or truck company, waited a couple of weeks to cleanse their system of drugs, and then went back to a different collection facility — or sometimes they'd go back to the same facility — and go through the process again, Hartman told attendees at a recent Drug and Alcohol Testing Industry Association conference.

The federal privacy laws and confidentiality concerns created a loophole in the testing regulations.

I-70 tunnel restricted in Colorado

GLENWOOD SPRINGS, Colo. — Interstate 70 west of Denver has a major traffic bottleneck this summer.

The Hanging Lake Tunnel in Glenwood Canyon has been reduced from four to two lanes to

"The personnel even knew they were coming back a few days after testing positive," Hartman said. "They'd go back in and test negative. They knew that personnel couldn't tell the employee's next motor carrier."

The drug testing industry is concerned about the second application with a different motor carrier. "That motor carrier is unsuspecting," Hartman said.

"The driver tests negative, they hire the driver and put the driver out on the road. The motor carrier isn't aware of the positive test."

As a result, the drivers have been able to exploit the loophole due to the short period of time between when the driver tests positive and the follow-up test. The driver thus avoids going through the required evaluation and educational process that follows a positive drug test.

The USDOT has been studying the issue for the past few months and has amended its procedures. While issuing a revised regulation was a primary concern, several months passed before the USDOT acted.

"We had a lot of legwork to do with our attorneys to protect the government and make sure the investigators in the field do not violate the Privacy Act and the confidentiality of the drivers," Hartman said.

The result was a 15-page set of instructions that investigators have to follow. "The goal was to find the drivers, take enforcement action, and remove them from the roadways — that's the ultimate goal," Hartman said.

Earlier this year, the USDOT investigated a drug testing consortium and was able to identify drivers who had tested positive and who came back and tested negative a short time later.

For more information, go to www.dot.gov/ost/dapc/index.html.

House delays pilot Mexican truck plan

WASHINGTON — The U.S. House of Representatives has put the brakes on the Bush Administration pilot program for allowing 100

Mexican trucking companies access to U.S. highways.

The House passed the "Safe American Roads Act of 2007" by a

whopping 411-3 margin. The bill suspends the current administration plan for giving Mexican trucks access to the U.S.

Instead, the House would only allow the border to open if a series of amendments are made, including limiting the pilot to three years for a total of 1,000 Mexican trucks, and setting up an independent review panel to oversee the program.

The panel could recommend modifications or termination of the program if it determines new guidelines aren't being followed.

Currently, most Mexican trucks are limited to a 20-mile commercial zone on either side of the border. At that point they must interline with a domestic carrier, although many large U.S. companies own Mexican-based fleets.

Under the new bill, the program must pass muster with Congress, the U.S. Transportation Department inspector general and the independent panel.

Furthermore, it calls for more transparency from the USDOT.

The department would be required to disclose such information as safety records of Mexican trucking companies; standards for evaluating truck safety; carriers that are part of the program; mechanisms for enforcing trucking safety laws; and details on penalties for noncompliance.

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Enforcement of Canadian hours rules begins July 1

TORONTO, Ont. — Motor Coach Canada has issued a notice to U.S. operators, reminding them that enforcement of the new hours-of-the-service rules begins July 1 in Canada.

The revamped regulations went into effect Jan. 1, but there has been a “soft enforcement” policy for the past five months. That changes July 1 in all provinces except Alberta, which has yet to adopt the rules. (See May 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Dave Carroll of Motor Coach Canada says there are six key factors related to the new rules that U.S. drivers need to keep in mind when bring a coach into Canada:

Drivers must be able to show in their log book that during the preceding 14 days, they had a 24-hour off-duty period. Not necessarily a calendar day off, just a period of 24 consecutive hours off.

Drivers must carry log sheets for the preceding 14 days.

Drivers cannot drive after the 16th hour from the time a driver's work shift started — despite the number of hours of on-duty time. For example, a driver who begins work at 6 a.m. cannot drive the

coach after 10 p.m., and cannot drive again until he or she has taken 8 consecutive hours off duty.

For every 24-hour (calendar) day, drivers must not exceed 14 hours on duty and must have at least 10 hours off duty.

For work cycles, U.S. drivers that are in compliance with the U.S. cycle of 70 hours in 8 days while in Canada don't need to worry about violating the Canadian cycles because Canada's new cycle limit (70 hours in 7 days) is actual-

ly more permissive than 70 in 8.

Drivers must indicate in their daily log each day they are in Canada, the cycle they have elected to use (Cycle One — 70 in 7, or Cycle Two — 120 in 14).

“For 99.9 percent of drivers, it

will be Cycle One (70 in 7), so be sure drivers write in the ‘remarks’ area of the log: ‘Cycle One,’” said Carroll, adding that “yes they are subject to getting tickets if they forget to mark this on every log sheet.”

Retire at age 65? Canada says ‘no’

Will you still need me when I'm 65?

Canadian provinces are saying ‘yes’

VICTORIA, British Columbia — Provinces across Canada are considering legislation that would ban mandatory retirement for workers age 65 and older.

B.C. has become the latest to consider such legislation, following in the footsteps of Ontario and other provinces.

Canada's population is getting older, and national polls show more older workers want to remain employed.

“The number of British Columbians over the age of 65 will more than double in the next 25 years, so it's important we prepare for that shift,” said provincial Attorney General Wally Oppal.

Bill 31 of the Human Rights Code Amendment Act would extend employee protections beyond the age 64, making it illegal for employers to discriminate force such people out of their jobs.

The code amendment — which, if passed, would take effect Jan. 1 — would force employers to change collective agreements and company policies.



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Report: U.S. infrastructure lagging

CHICAGO — The relatively low rate of investment by the United States in virtually all aspects of transportation-related infrastructure — roads, bridges, airports, public transit and railway systems — is an “emerging crisis” that will compromise the ability of the nation’s cities to compete globally, says a new report published by the Urban Land Institute and Ernst Young.

Infrastructure 2007: A Global Perspective offers a comprehensive look at the status of current and planned infrastructure investment and development in a variety of categories in countries worldwide, with a particular focus on the U.S., China, Japan, India and Europe.

The first of its kind, the report discusses the evolving infrastructure market, including private and combination public-private systems for funding, construction, operations and management.

“America is more of a follower and no longer a world leader when it comes to infrastructure,” the report states.

“Other countries marshal vanguard strategies and provide the

contemporary lessons for developing best practices in public/private finance, intermodal transport, congestion pricing and high-speed rail.

“Too often (in the U.S.), projects focus on restoration rather than rethinking the model and finding possible efficiencies.... There is a tendency to invest in the infrastructure we have instead of the infrastructure we will need.”

According to Urban Land Institute Vice chairwoman Dale Ann Reiss, the private sector is going to play a significant role in what she predicts will be a global movement to build and modernize

the world’s infrastructure.

“One thing in this report that is crystal clear to a Friedmanian economist like me is that the private sector — by virtue of both the capital it controls and the skill sets it exhibits — is going to play an increasingly important role in the effective and efficient development of infrastructure here in the U.S. and abroad over the next 50 years,” says Reiss.

“Public-private partnerships are here to stay and may well be the only viable way for governments to reach its infrastructure development goals.”

Public transit agencies seek private charter operators

The following public transit providers have informed the United Motorcoach Association of their intent to provide charter bus service unless willing and able private operators step forward to provide the service. UMA urges appropriate operators to respond to these notices.

Crawford County, Penn. Deadline: May 30, 2007. Write to:

Timothy C. Geibel, Executive Director, Crawford Area Transportation Authority, 231 Chestnut St., Meadville, PA 16335. Phone: (814) 336-5600.

Cheatham, Davidson, Maury, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson and Wilson counties, Tenn. Deadline: June 1, 2007. Write to: Diane Thorne, Executive Director, Franklin Transit Authority, P.O.

Washington blocks driver texting, hand-held phoning

OLYMPIA, Wash. — Using your hands to talk on a cell phone or tap out a text message while behind the wheel becomes illegal in Washington state next year.

Gov. Christine Gregoire signed the measures into law last month, flanked by children who were seriously injured after being hit by drivers.

Under the laws, drivers who read and compose text messages or talk on a cell phone without a hands-free device could face a \$101 ticket. The text-messaging

ban takes effect Jan. 1; the cell phone law will be enforced starting in July.

Drivers are exempt in some situations, including emergencies, and neither offense will be enough to get a driver pulled over by the police.

Meanwhile, in New Jersey, a bill in the General Assembly consumer affairs committee would allow police to pull over drivers solely for reading or sending text messages. Violators could face a fine of up to \$250. The bill is A4146.

line: June 13, 2007. Write to: Michael J. Seither, Razorback Transit, 155 Razorback Road ADSB 131, Fayetteville, AR 72701.

Androscoggin, Franklin and Oxford counties, Maine. Deadline: June 18, 2007. Write to: Eugene R. Skibitsky, general manager, Western Maine Transportation Services, 76 Merrow Rd., Auburn, ME 04210. (207) 784-9335.

Box 266 (708 Columbia Ave.), Franklin, TN 37065. Phone: (615) 790-0604.

Vega Baja, Puerto Rico. Deadline: June 1, 2007. Write to: Oficina de Transportacion Alternativa (Charter Bus), Gobierno Municipal de Vega Baja, P.O. Box 4555, Vega Baja, PR 00694.

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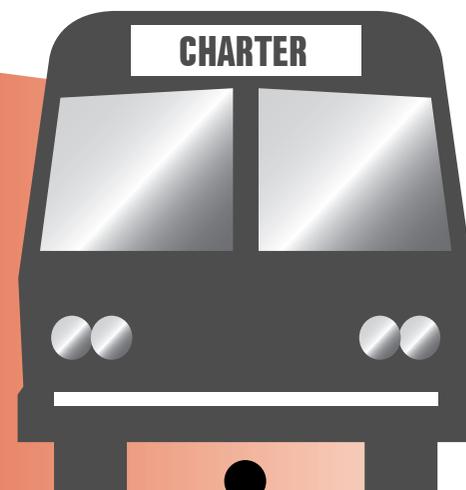
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Biofuels have unanticipated consequences

ARLINGTON, Va. — The headlong rush to expand production of biodiesel and other biofuels is apparently going to have a few consequences other than those analysts already have identified, like higher food prices.

It's also going to significantly increase the number of giant tanker trucks on U.S. highways; strain the U.S. trucking industry, and contribute to the nationwide shortage of long-haul drivers.

Those factors and others surfaced here at the first national summit on agricultural and food transportation.

The director of government affairs for a company that builds ethanol plants said demand for tanker trucks to move renewable fuels will mushroom because fuel terminals and pipelines are unable to accept biodiesel and ethanol.

In many places, the refineries that produce ethanol and biodiesel are rarely served by rail and are never served by fuel pipelines, making trucks the only transportation resource for refined biofuels.

He estimated that a national increase in biofuel production of 3 billion gallons a year would require about 4,500 trucks per day to move corn, fuel and other materials related to biofuel production.

An official of the American Trucking Associations also warns that trucking industry "capacity constraints and the driver shortage will make (such) growth a challenge."

And the director of transportation for a company that hauls poultry and grain to and from farms and processing plants said he expects more biofuel production to tighten competition for truck drivers in the coming years.

He noted his company relies on a lot of independent truckers to haul grain and if they start hauling for renewable fuels producers his company will be competing with those refineries, not just for grain but for drivers as well.

You REALLY need to get a handle on costs

By Dave Millhouser
ABC Companies

The contrast was startling: Two coach operators, asked the same question, gave answers that were worlds apart.

I was asked to travel with a recently hired executive and give him an introduction to the coach industry.

He asked two coach companies how much they spend on parts. One manager responded with a cost per mile, precise to the penny. The other, in this case the owner, shrugged his shoulders. Ironically, "Shrug's" company is profitable and well run in every other way.

One of our industry's most pressing problems is that far too many operators really don't have a handle on their costs.

Companies that do a good job are losing business to competition that is pricing trips based on poor, or nonexistent, information.

Years ago a tour broker decided to buy a used bus in an effort to soak up some of that easy money you folks make. He asked if his budget of a penny a mile for maintenance was about right. He was stunned to hear that — at that time — 50 cents was a better number. Imagine competing with this guy... for the eight months he survived.

We all know companies that run trips for little more than the price of fuel and driver... with no idea of how to factor in all the other "stuff" that matters. Like, insurance, bus payments, maintenance, rent and so on.

Those and a ton of other small items are real expenses that you have to pay, and which should be an integral part of the cost calculation that determines your pricing.

Most industries have "accepted" methods for determining and categorizing costs, but our business doesn't seem to be able to get there. No one has developed a method that most operators can use.

While there aren't any easy solutions or formulas, here are some things I've learned from customers.

First, it is possible to determine your costs. It's not easy but possible. Once you've identified and quantified everything, it's just a matter of keeping the data current. You don't need sophisticated software, a spread sheet will do.

One operator has painstakingly developed a program that calculates actual cost of a trip based on current information. He identifies his fixed and variable costs, and the computer weighs them, producing an accurate snapshot of a trip's real cost. On occasion he has to run at a loss, but at least he KNOWS it, and can make a decision whether it is smart business to operate the

everyone benefits.

Don't lie to yourself, like assuming an engine will last a million miles, or that old A/C compressor will make it through the summer. Those notions can cost you big time. Base your price on the best information available, not your wishes.

Make sure you include the bus's honest share of overhead in costing every job. Over the years I've dealt with many companies that were honest in their dealings, and a few that were not. The folks I like best are honest all the time. But the hallmark of EVERY successful company is that its owners and managers are honest with themselves.

So, you've nailed it all down. Life is good, and you're relaxing in front of the TV when a news bulletin flashes on. You see your bus, on a charter for the Young Lawyers Club, floating down the river towards Niagara Falls.

What we have here is "the tunnel at the end of the light." If you're lucky, the biggest catastrophe you'll experience in your bus career will be an engine blown 2,000 miles from home. Worst case is the Niagara Falls scenario.

You will have catastrophes, and insurance will never cover all the costs. Disasters have to be paid for, and should be factored into your pricing. If you run a trip at cost, and blow a tire, it's a disaster.

It sounds silly but the unforeseen tragedy needs to be planned for and paid for.

For the record, the executive who traveled with me has left the industry. Hope it wasn't me.

Dave Millhouser is an account representative for ABC Companies. Contact him at: dmillhouser@abc-companies.com



Dave Millhouser

'Most industries have accepted methods for determining and categorizing costs, but our business doesn't seem to be able to get there.'

trip at a loss. Some of his competitors think they're making money and end up hurting everyone.

The United Motorcoach Association and the International Motor Coach Group have "20 Groups" where members share financial and operational information on a variety of areas in an effort to analyze their businesses.

Any time you can participate in this sort of thing (or even an informal gathering of like-minded operators), do it. It will greatly enhance your ideas and offer benchmarks for comparison to your business.

Within the bounds of decency (and the law) help your competitors understand their costs. They don't need to know YOUR costs, but if they understand their own,

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ISSUE NO. 101

Advisory Board

2007 engines seem OK so far, says Waste Management

ATLANTA — The nation's largest operator of garbage trucks reports that its initial impression of the 2007 reduced-emissions diesel engines is positive.

In fact, the engines are performing much better than Waste Management executives expected.

John Lemmons, director of fleet and equipment performance at Waste Management, said in remarks at the Waste Expo trade show that data from the 10 '07 trucks the company currently has on the road shows nearly the same fuel economy as its '06 models.

Also, Waste Management has been able to extend its oil drain intervals to 600 hours with the CJ-4 oil required for '07 engines.

"These engines still need to be run in more to give us more accu-

rate long-term data — but we expected much, much worse preliminary performance data than what we are seeing," Lemmons told a trucking publication.

Since the "oldest" '07 vehicle Waste Management has in its fleet was only put into service in November, it's still relatively early

to say whether the new engines will remain "fuel economy neutral" over the long term.

Another surprise and unexpected benefit from the '07 engines is that both horsepower and torque have increased compared with '06 models, with Waste Management's drivers reporting a noticeable

improvement in the power and responsiveness of the trucks, he said. "That's another part we've been happy about."

Still, there is a downside to '07 technology, he cautioned. The new engines added \$10,000 to the base sticker price of Waste Management's refuse trucks.

Meanwhile, from a performance perspective, Lemmons said the '07s are surprisingly good, and he hopes that doesn't change as testing continues. "We're pretty amazed that fuel economy remained flat between our '07 and '06 trucks running the same routes. That is pretty encouraging."

Biodiesel study by truckers has small negatives

FORT DODGE, Iowa — The "Two Million Mile Haul," a comprehensive study of using a 20 percent soy biodiesel blend in over-the-road trucks, has passed the 500,000 mile mark. (See Jan. 1 issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Early results from the Decker Truck Line Inc. rigs show that winter fuel efficiency was down slightly for the blend, with no gelling problems and few operational concerns.

Decker is running 10 trucks in a control group (fueled with 100 percent No. 2 petroleum diesel) and nine trucks in the B20 test group (fueled with 20 percent biodiesel, 80 percent petroleum diesel).

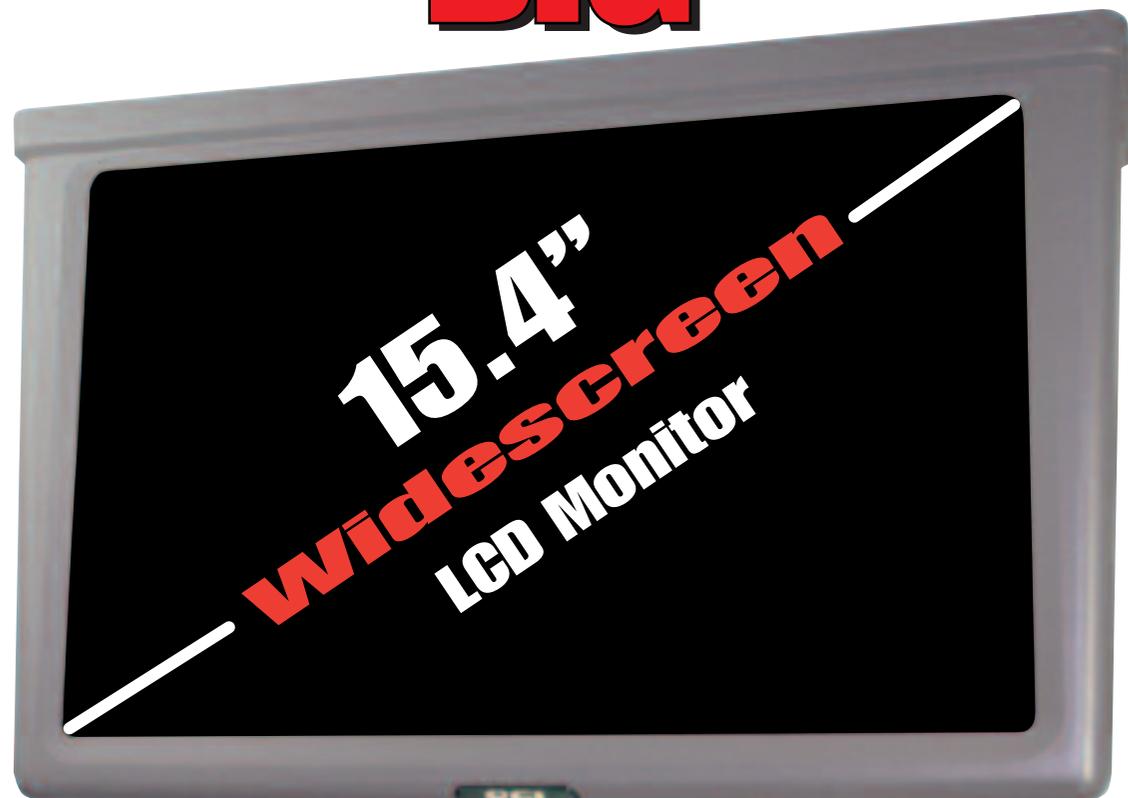
Average fuel consumption for the control group was 6.01 miles per gallon, while average consumption for the B20 group was 5.80 mpg, or a 3.5 percent reduction. Those conducting the test say the difference was not statistically significant.

The study also found that driver-to-driver variability is two to three times greater than the difference in fuel efficiency between the two fuels.

Winter driving produced relatively few cold-flow issues. Fuel for both groups was treated with a commercial fuel additive and No. 1 diesel (40 percent blend) was used for a brief time during a severe cold snap. No drivers experienced fuel gelling problems.

The groups conducting the test say an entire four-season driving cycle should be completed before conclusions can be made on fuel efficiency.

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ABC Parts Source opens large West Coast facility

GARDEN GROVE, Calif. — ABC Parts Source has opened a 30,000-square-foot warehouse in Anaheim, Calif., that will serve as the company's primary West Coast parts inventory center.

The new warehouse is about nine miles from ABC Companies' West Coast sales office and showroom in Garden Grove.

Inventory being stocked in the new facility will include parts and components for a wide variety of coach and transit equipment makes and models. It features a spacious will-call parts pick-up and waiting area.

The Garden Grove location will continue to provide service and sales support for bus and

coach operators, with the new Anaheim facility providing parts support for customers and the service center.

"This will dramatically reduce the parts lead time for service and retail parts customers," said an ABC spokeswoman.

Managing the new facility is Neil Wells, the ABC Parts Source manager for the western region. He has been an ABC employee for nine years.

ABC also revealed that plans are in the works to open an additional warehouse in New Jersey, giving the company greater parts coverage on the East Coast. That facility is tentatively scheduled to open a year from now.



ABC Parts' new Anaheim warehouse will help improve service to customers.

The main warehouse location remains in Florida.

ABC said the expansion program is part of the company's overall growth plan that calls for direct-

ing more resources toward developing the parts market segment.

"The West Coast market represents a growing business opportunity for ABC," said Ron Cornell,

ABC chairman. "Growing our business here brings balance and potential to our overall portfolio."

The address of the new Anaheim facility is 1400 N. Daly St.

State assistance guarantees return of N.Y. commuter service

ALBANY, N.Y. — The New York State Department of Transportation has awarded \$265,000 in additional annual operating assistance to Adirondack/Pine Hill Trailways to reinstate commuter bus service to two small communities off Interstate 87 between Albany and New York City.

The service to the village of Tannersville and the hamlet of Haines Falls resumed late last month. The subsidy also means continued to service to Cairo.

"Maintaining transit service is crucial to the mobility and quality of life for residents and visitors in rural Greene County," said Acting

state Transportation Commissioner Astrid Glynn. "The department of transportation is committed to working with communities and private carriers to continue to meet public transportation needs throughout New York state."

Adirondack Trailways discontinued service to Tannersville and

Haines Falls last year because of low ridership.

The state money assures one round trip daily to the mountaintop municipalities, as well as one additional round trip daily from now through Labor Day.

The service takes passengers from Haines Falls to Kingston, with

stops in Tannersville, Hunter, Phoenicia and Woodstock. Connections to New York City and other destinations can be made in Kingston.

The \$265,000 in supplementary funding will bring total state and federal funding for Adirondack Trailways for fiscal 2007-08 to nearly \$4.7 million.



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Black Hills Stage acquires Denver-to-border operator

NORFOLK, Neb. — Busco Inc., the largest coach operator in the Great Plains, is expanding its line-run service from Nebraska and Colorado to the border with Mexico.

To do that, Busco subsidiary Black Hills Stage Lines has purchased Pacifico Transportation, an 11-month-old line-run company based in suburban Denver.

Steve Busskohl, president of Black Hills Stage Lines, said Pacifico "is a perfect acquisition for Black Hills Stage Lines as it gives us an opportunity to expand our scheduled service to the U.S.-Mexico border."

Busskohl said Black Hills plans to maintain the routes, schedules and locations Pacifico riders are familiar with in Denver and Aurora, Colo., and El Paso, Texas, while looking to improve and expand service.

Pacifico Transportation, which operates under the name Autobuses Pacifico, was formed last year by Jorge Rodriguez of Highland Ranch, Colo.

Black Hills Stage Lines has been in business since 1962. Its parent company, Busco, also owns Arrow Stage Lines of Norfolk and Omaha. The company operates upwards of 160 motorcoaches.

ABA adds vendor exhibit day to Marketplace business show

WASHINGTON — The American Bus Association is adding a one-day vendor-supplier exposition to its annual Marketplace.

The new component is being called "The Market," and ABA said it was developed in response to comments made by Marketplace attendees.

The Market will give ABA associate members an opportunity

to showcase their products and operator members "a venue where they can see the latest technological innovations in equipment and new cutting edge product offerings from suppliers," said ABA President Peter Pantuso.

The initial vendor-supplier showcase will be Saturday, Feb. 2, at the ABA Marketplace in Virginia Beach, Va.

Leading bus builder in UK buys Plaxton

FALKRIK, Scotland — Alexander Dennis Ltd. has bought coach maker Plaxton Holdings to create a near-\$500 million bus and coach-building operation.

The deal, valued at around \$79 million, brings together three of the most famous bus brands in the United Kingdom — Alexander, Dennis and Plaxton.

The combined company will make around 2,000 double- and single-decker vehicles annually.

Alexander Dennis was formed three years ago when the business was rescued from bankruptcy. It employs 1,400 people at two manufacturing locations and holds 40 percent of the UK bus market.

Plaxton employs more than 500 people at its Scarborough facility in North Yorkshire and Anston plant in South Yorkshire, England, and makes bodies for nearly a third of all new coaches registered in the UK.

The new firm will operate as Alexander Dennis.

Colin Robertson, who has been

Michelin boosts prices, battles 'look-alike' tires

GREENVILLE, S.C. — Michelin North America is joining Bridgestone-Firestone, Goodyear and other tire makers in increasing prices of its commercial tires. (See April 15 issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Commercial bus and truck tire prices are being increased by up to 4 percent on Michelin and BFGoodrich brands sold in the United States, effective June 1.

Meanwhile, Michelin said it is stepping up its battle against look-alike tires marketed under the Double Coin brand name.

In December 2005, Michelin alerted more than 5,000 dealers in various countries of the risks of marketing look-alike tires from Asia.

The Chinese-made tires copy the tread patterns of Michelin

commercial vehicle tires, and while the treads may look alike, the look-alikes may not deliver the same grip or longevity of performance as an authentic Michelin tire, says the company.

In the latest action, Michelin North America has initiated a suit against the Chinese Manufacturers Alliance LLC. The patent and copyright infringement lawsuit, filed in federal district court in Greenville, accuses CMA of importing and selling the Double Coin RT606 and the DynaTrac RS330 tires, both of which utilize unauthorized copies of the patented Michelin XZE tread pattern.

Michelin is seeking an injunction against further distribution, as well as monetary damages.

For more information, go to www.michelin.us.com.

chief executive of Alexander Dennis for roughly a month, said the firm would look to work with overseas manufacturers such as Volvo and Scania.

"We will continue to invest significantly in new bus and coach products, strengthening our in-

house line-up while also forging strong alliances with international manufacturers," said Robertson.

Plaxton has annual sales of just under \$120 million, while Alexander Dennis had sales of \$336 million for the year ended last September.

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Calendar

JUNE 2007

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

10-13 Pennsylvania Bus Association Annual Meeting, Holiday Inn Ocean Front, Ocean Front, Md. Info: www.pabus.org, or call (717) 236-9042.

22-24 Bus History Association 2007 Convention, Holiday Inn Burlington, Burlington, Ont. Info: E-mail bdrouillard3@cogeco.ca, or (519) 977-0664.

28-July 1 New England Bus Association Annual Meeting, North Falmouth, Mass. Info: Go to www.newenglandbus.org, or call (978) 255-2700.

JULY 2007

9-12 Florida Motorcoach Association Annual Meeting, Marriott Key Largo Bay Resort, Key Largo, Fla. Info: Go to www.floridamotorcoach.org.

19-22 Network Invitational 100, Wyndham Gettysburg Hotel, Gettysburg, Pa. Info: Go to www.motorcoach.com, or call (540) 477-3323.

AUGUST 2007

8-11 International Motor

Coach Group Strategic Alliance Meeting, French Lick Springs Resort & Casino, French Lick, Ind. Info: www.imgcoach.com.

11-15 Motorcoach Association of South Carolina Annual Meeting & Marketplace, Myrtle Beach Marriott Resort at Grande Dunes, Myrtle Beach, S.C. Info: Go to www.scmotorcoach.org.

18-21 Alabama Motorcoach Association Annual Meeting & Marketplace, Huntsville, Ala. Info: www.alabamamotorcoach.org.

25-27 Maryland Motorcoach Association Marketplace, Sheraton Baltimore North Hotel, Towson, Md. Info: Go to www.marylandmotorcoach.com.

People

The president of **Safety Vision**, *Bruce Smith*, has been named Small Business Person of the Year for Texas by the **U.S. Small Business Administration**. Safety Vision, which is headquartered in Houston, provides on-board surveillance and collision

avoidance camera systems.

Selection criteria for the award include the businesses' staying power, territorial expansion, square footage occupied, increase in net worth and growth in personnel.

Since it was founded 14 years ago, Safety Vision has grown to 115 employees. For more information, go to www.safetyvision.com.

Jonathan Randall has been named director of sales and marketing of **Freightliner Custom Chassis Corp.** Randall replaces *Dean Schaper*, who is retiring at the end of this month. Most recently, Randall was director of product marketing for Freightliner Trucks. Schaper is retiring after 12 years as FCCC's director of sales and marketing.

Evacuations

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Stung by the criticism, USDOT took a new look at its evacuation programs and opted in 2006 to go with Coach America, the second-largest motorcoach operator in North America after Coach USA.

Lentzsch said this year's contract is expected to be different than the one the company had with the government last year because there were no major storms along the Gulf Coast, the area most prone to hurricanes during the usual five-month season, June 1 to Nov. 30.

Under last year's contract, Coach America staged 200 coaches in Carville, La., about 20 miles south of Baton Rouge, which would have been available for evacuations on 24-hour notice. In addition, the company signed on another 1,100 close-by coaches that remained in daily operations, but would have been available within 48 hours.

None of the 1,300 coaches would have been used until the states had exhausted their own resources and supply of buses and needed help from the federal government.

Lentzsch said the new contract is expected to require Coach America to have available between 1,000 and 1,300 coaches that would remain in service, but be close enough to respond to an emergency within 48 hours. Some of them could arrive within 36

hours, depending on their location when the call for help goes out.

Doing away with the staged coaches that would be available within 24 hours appears to be due to the hurricane season being a bust last year and none of the coaches being used.

Lentzsch said placing a value on the buses is very complex and because they were not used last year, it would be easy for some people to conclude that the value to the government was not there.

"I disagree with that conclusion, though," he added. "We could move a whole lot of people during the 12-hour period between the 24 hours it would take to get the staged coaches there and the 36 hours it would take to get the other coaches there."

In addition to the planning and operational differences, USDOT is expected to turn over the contract — after this year's negotiations are completed — to the Federal Emergency Management Agency. It is not known why such a switch is being made, but FEMA is responsible for responding to emergencies.

Meanwhile, USDOT officials say they already are developing plans to solicit public bids for hurricane evacuation services for 2008. The initial two-year agreement that USDOT has with Coach America, which included the second-year option, expires Jan. 31, 2008.

Security grants

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Security restructured the program, meaning it changed the rules, for fiscal 2007. This year, applicants were divided into two tiers. Eligibility for Tier I — considered the highest risk — and Tier II was based on an analysis of fleet size and service areas considered the most at risk of a terrorist attack.

Six "companies," with fleets of more than 250 over-the-road buses, were approved for Tier I — Academy, Greyhound, Peter Pan, Coach America, Coach USA and the Trailways Transportation Sys-

tem. The five companies and Trailways shared \$8.2 million of the \$11.6 million awarded for fiscal '07. Trailways was awarded more than \$1.6 million which will be shared by its members.

All other coach companies were lumped into Tier II and 33 companies ended up sharing in about \$3.5 million.

The Department of Homeland Security says that for the Bus Security Grant Program it seeks to assist owners and operators of fixed-route and charter bus services in obtaining the resources required to support security measures such as enhanced planning,

Academy Express: \$854,575
Hoboken, N.J.
All West Coachlines (Coach America): \$42,642 — Sacramento, Calif.
Anderson Coach and Travel: \$18,922
Greenville, Pa.
Arrow Stage Lines: \$298,406
Omaha, Neb.
Bloom's Bus Lines: \$25,592
Taunton, Mass.
C&J Trailways: \$64,216
Portsmouth, N.H.
Celebrity Coaches of America: \$175,293 — Las Vegas
Classic Coach: \$164,461
Bohemia, N.Y.
Coach America: \$550,443
Dallas
Coach USA Inc.: \$1,641,671
Paramus, N.J.
DATTCO: \$129,892 — New Britain, Conn.
Double A Charter: \$14,163
Rocky Hill, Conn.
Greyhound Lines: \$3,283,584
Dallas

Gunther Charters: \$44,167
Hanover, Md.
H & L Charter: \$26,214
Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.
Hagey Coach: \$119,763
Souderton, Pa.
Haymarket Transportation: \$61,150
Haymarket, Va.
HME Executive Coach: \$28,840
Irving, Texas
Indian Trails: \$180,346
Owosso, Mich.
Industrial Bus Lines: \$123,427
Odessa, Texas
Keller Transportation: \$77,877
Waldorf, Md.
Lakeland Bus Lines: \$59,776
Dover, N.J.
Lamoille Valley Transportation: \$76,530 — Morrisville, Vt.
Monroe Bus Corporation: \$97,843
Brooklyn, N.Y.
Monsey New Square Trails: \$263,767
Spring Valley, N.Y.
Peter Pan Bus Lines Inc.: \$174,234
Springfield, Mass.

facility security upgrades and vehicle and driver protection.

The Intercity Bus Security Grant Program is a small piece of the Department of Homeland Security Infrastructure Protection Program, which totals \$445 million for fiscal '07. Other elements of the program include port, public transit and intercity rail security; grants to protect dams, power plants, nuclear facilities, stadiums, arenas and chemical plants, and the Highway Watch program operated by the American Trucking Associations.

Listed below are the companies that received '07 grants and the amounts awarded:

Private One of New York: \$116,508
Brooklyn, N.Y.
Raz Transportation (Coach America): \$88,076 — Portland, Ore.
Riteway Bus Service Inc.: \$254,300
Richfield, Wis.
Southeastern Stages: \$80,271
Atlanta
Southern Coach Co. (Coach America): \$301,901 — Durham, N.C.
Star Shuttle and Tour Inc.: \$191,370
San Antonio, Texas
Starr Transit Company: \$66,585
Trenton, N.J.
Sun Coach Lines/David Sunstein: \$63,000 — McKeesport, Pa.
Time Lines LLC: \$30,126
Oklahoma City
Tonche Transit: \$57,115
Mount Tremper, N.Y.
Trailways Transportation System: \$1,654,830 — Fairfax, Va.
Trans-Bridge Lines: \$97,439
Bethlehem, Pa.
Travel Lynx of Brevard: \$40,685
Cocoa, Fla.

Greyhound Canada workers strike, shutting down service

CALGARY, Alberta — Drivers, mechanics and other employees at Greyhound Canada went on strike last month after rejecting the company's contract proposals.

Greyhound was forced to suspend service in provinces across Canada when more than a thousand of its drivers and mechanics walked off the job.

Affected first were the western provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, but the impact spread into Ontario.

The workers are members of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1374.

The strike came on the eve of Victoria Day weekend, the first three-day weekend of the summer in Canada, and as FirstGroup plc of Aberdeen, Scotland, awaits regulatory approval to buy Greyhound's parent company, Laidlaw International of Naperville, Ill., for \$2.8 billion.

FirstGroup is acquiring Laid-

law to add to its school-bus operation, the largest in the U.S.

A Greyhound spokeswoman was quoted as saying that the lines of communication with the union remain open. "We hope to resume service as quickly as possible," spokeswoman Anna Folmnsbee told one wire service.

"The ball is in their court," Local 1374 President Jim Higgs told an interviewer. The major issue is wages, and Greyhound will have to come back with a "substantial increase" in what it offers, Higgs said.

"Once people are walking the streets, the expectations will rise," Higgs added.

Greyhound typically operates 1,000 departures a day across Canada.

Meanwhile, Greyhound's talks with the union representing many of its U.S. drivers and mechanics continue. The contract covering those workers has been extended five times; it expires May 31.

MCI helps promote 'cleaner' travel

TUCSON, Ariz. — Motor Coach Industries has signed on as a major sponsor of a cross country tour by a group of scholars who will highlight environmental conservation, use of public lands, and national progress towards a more sustainable future.

The tour, which begins June 12 in Washington, D.C. and includes nearly 40 states, is being organized by the Morris K. Udall Foundation, which was established by Congress 15 years ago to honor former Arizona Rep. Morris Udall's 30-year legacy of public service and environmental activism.

The foundation, which is based in Tucson, awards merit-based scholarships, fellowships and internships to students studying the environment and Native American policy. It also is the home to the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution and other environment-related programs.

The Udall Legacy Tour is taking 13 Udall scholars on a 54-day, "eco-journey," covering 8,606 miles to promote innovative environmental public-service activities in 26 cities, plus six national parks and six Native American communities.

The scholars will be riding the first MCI J4500 LX-model coach equipped with a 2007 reduced-emissions Caterpillar engine. For the trip, the coach will use 20-percent biodiesel and 80-percent ultra-low-sulfur diesel blended fuel.

Caterpillar also is a sponsor of the trip. When the tour reaches Burlington, Vt., on June 20, the Udall team will be on hand for the launch of the University of Vermont "Green Coach Certification" program. The program is aimed at demonstrating the viability of using biodiesel fuel by the motorcoach industry.

Dave Kestenbaum, senior program manager for the UV Tourism Data Center, said motorcoach operator Lamoille Valley Transportation of Morrisville, Vt., will be awarded the university's first Green Coach Certification.

Lamoille Valley and the university's Rubenstein School for the Environment and Natural Resources will be responsible for furthering emissions research during the Udall Tour.

MCI Vice President and Chief Customer Officer Patricia Ziska said MCI was participating in the tour because it wants to promote the concept that motorcoach travel is both environmentally friendly and luxurious.

"Passengers can sit back and relax, work on their computers, watch the news or whatever, and they're in a much more comfortable environment than their car," she said, adding that fully occupied motorcoaches use less energy per passenger mile than planes, trains or automobiles.

The tour ends Aug. 4 in Tucson. Real-



Madden, MCI Roll On Together: For the past 20 years, Pro Football Hall of Fame Coach John Madden has been the celebrity spokesman for Motor Coach Industries. To mark the milestone, MCI President and CEO Tom Sorrells presented Madden with a replica of his E-model MCI, decorated with scenes from his football career.

time data about the performance of the coach, along with video blogs, will be posted on the Udall Foundation Website, www.udall.gov, which also includes the complete itinerary and information about specific activities at each stop.

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Winning on the Web

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

contact links, and it should serve the company as a database resource. If your Website isn't measuring up, you may want to consider doing what Holland did. Here are some of the key steps:

Get help. If you don't have the time or Internet expertise, hire a

professional. Holland works with Ripple Communications, a Charlotte, N.C.-based company that provides professional Web, print and multimedia design and development services, and its president, Jim Deitzel.

Chicago Classic Coach, a tour and charter company founded by Richard Hausman, turned to Pervaiz Karim to create its Website. A former taxi and limousine fleet

operator, Karim got into the Internet business after inventing a dispatch software system in 1991 that's still used today.

"To be good at the Web, you have to be in it full-time," says Karim, who recommends leaving this part of the business to experts "so you can carry on with growing your company." Karim also recommends querying colleagues to find Web developers with experience in transportation or related industries.

Think through the dollars. Budget for Web marketing, figuring out where and how you want to spend your dollars. Web services range from basic design to Web hosting and search-engine optimizing.

"You don't have to impress visitors with glitz and flash," says Alice Lemon, the in-house Web developer at MCI. "You need to budget for search engines to draw people to your site." Be sure your company is listed in online ads, online city guides, Yahoo Local, Google Maps and Yellow Pages sites.

First impressions count. The Internet gives even the smallest operators new marketing opportunities and reach. The Web has become the first place many customers turn to for information on a company and its products. With upwards of 3,700 interstate motorcoach operators, it makes sense to have a Web presence.

To make sure your Website stands out, Lemon of MCI and Dietzel of Ripple Communications, who assisted in MCI's Website design, have developed a "best practices" guide that includes the following advice.

Your Website should reflect the personality of your business and demonstrate that you care about your customer's experience as a browser. Your site should accurately reflect your brand, using your logo and colors correctly.

Think about the type of information your customers seek. Then be sure the site features the content important to them, including company background, photos of your equipment, online reservations, safety ratings, news, and customer testimonials.

Keep information current and correct. Check your spelling, punctuation and grammar. Review your site every 14 days, changing coach photos when you add new equipment. Include exterior and interior photos of your coaches. Show happy passengers and the places where your coaches travel.

Provide plenty of opportunities for customers to contact you. Include e-mail addresses, contact forms, phone numbers, company address, forms to request a quote, brochure downloads, and "have-someone-call-me" telephone response forms. Guarantee a response time.

Include at least 30 percent

"value-added" content, such as tips, membership affiliations and additional links.

All Website displays should work with both PCs and Macs. Keep font sizes readable. Sites should load within 5-10 seconds.

Build relationships

Websites are a great tool for maintaining customer relationships. There's virtually no way to stay in touch with customers by telephone today. "If you want to grow, technology is the way," says Karim. "An online auto responder lets you keep your clientele apprised of what's going on. Use it to broadcast seasonal discount offerings, upcoming trip schedules, or new hires."

But don't constantly blast messages. Karim suggests broadcasting no more than once every two weeks.

E-newsletters are another effective medium. *FYI by MCI*, the company's monthly newsletter, began in April 2003 with a list 400 subscribers. Today, it reaches more than 3,500 industry readers. "Every communication that comes off your Website should go into a database," says Lemon. "With the user's permission, use it to build your client list."

Blogs are also becoming a way to create dialogue.

Build traffic

There are two ways to get visitors to your Website. First, be sure your web address is featured on all advertising, promotional, marketing and business materials, as well as on your coaches. Second, optimize your visibility on search engines.

Google, Yahoo and other search engines offer key-word advertising and pay-per-click advertising. You can purchase keyword advertising at www.google.com and www.overture.com.

Both Karim and Lemon suggest expert help with search engines. "You have to be concise. There can't be more than 85 characters in your company's description for links," says Karim.

"It's impossible to make sure you have every conceivable key-word term accounted for," says Lemon. "Someone comes up with something like 'machines on wheels,' and you may never think of it, so you constantly have to keep up and audit searches."

Joining the crowd

Despite the omnipresent nature of the Internet, many coach operators have been slow to establish a Website or to consistently upgrade their Web presence. The reasons for taking action are plentiful.

Credibility. A well-designed site with useful, reliable information will build trust among online visitors.

Visibility. A Website is, essentially, round-the-clock advertising

on demand, bringing in customers you wouldn't be able to reach through more conventional means.

Cost of Sales. Even the most extensive Website costs only a fraction of a brick-and-mortar outlet.

Advertising. Put your Web address on all of your business materials and equipment; you can convey a lot of information without a lot of cash.

Build clientele, drive referrals. A Website makes it easy for satisfied customers to refer people to you. And, by soliciting contact information from those who visit your site, you can build for the future.

Where to get help?

Deitzel of Ripple Communications (e-mail: im@ripplecommunications.com) and Karim (e-mail: pervaizrk@gmail.com) are just two sources.

Members of the United Motorcoach Association can purchase customized Websites at discounted prices because UMA partners with AmericanEagle.com to offer Websites that will work with most budgets.

"With UMA's Website Design Program through AmericanEagle.com, you can choose from a variety of packages designed to maximize your exposure and present a sleek, professional looking Website to potential customers," says UMA President and CEO Victor Parra.

The UMA-AmericanEagle program offers these packages:

The Beginner is a basic, one-page Website specifically designed for those companies that don't have an existing Website or are completely new to the Web. The site will feature a logo, photos of the company fleet, contact information, and text for \$395 to set up and \$75 per month to host.

The Advanced is a full Website with a content management tool. With this tool the operator can adjust the site's colors, put in your own content, pictures and the like. While the Website is based on a template, users have plenty of flexibility in colors schemes and design. The Advanced Package is available for \$2,500 to setup and \$75 per month for hosting.

The Premium is a fully customized, high-end Website. The site is unique to each customer and designed for the operator that's serious about implementing a strategic marketing plan that capitalizes on the Internet. The Premium Package starts at \$6,375, 15 percent less than regular price.

For more information about AmericanEagle services, contact Chris Foss or Eric Elliott at (703) 299-8299, or by e-mail at chrisf@americaneagle.com. Contact Deitzel at jim@ripplecommunications.com or Karim at pervaizrk@gmail.com.

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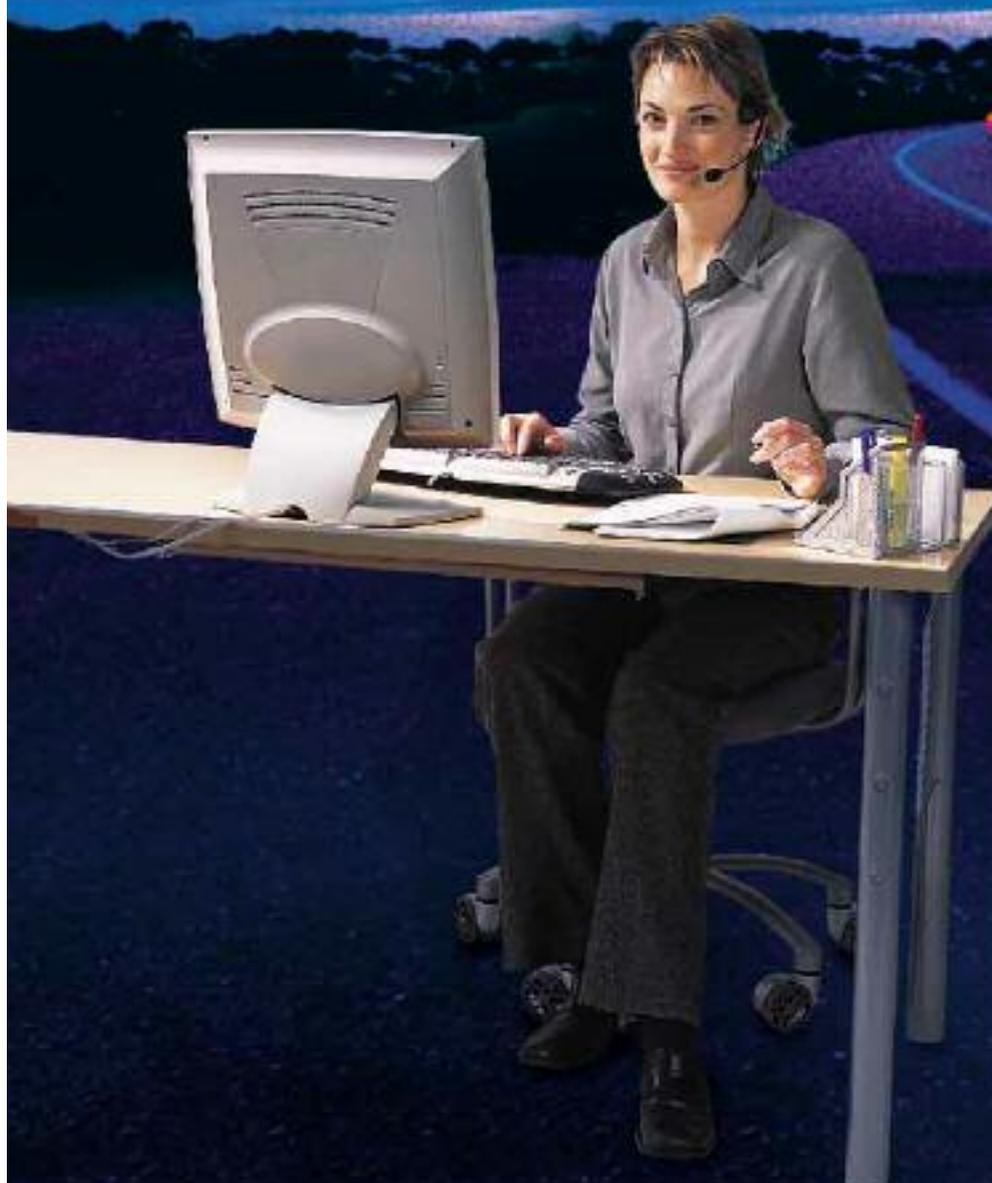
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