

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

The Driver Shortage

Little things count in keeping drivers

By Dave Millhouser
ABC Companies

"I'll buy a bus from you... if you'll drive it for me."

This coach owner was kidding, of course, but he also was illustrating the difficulty the current driver shortage has created. On occasion he has equipment idle, despite having work for it, because he can't get enough drivers.

He can't expand his fleet to meet market opportunities.

It's not difficult to identify the causes of the shortage. Transit authorities and trucking companies offer higher pay, and predictable schedules. Drug screening and more stringent requirements for licensing further shrink the pool of

available drivers.

We all have funny stories about operators who have messed up, but the truth is that driving a charter coach is a complex job. Your drivers, more than anyone else, are the face of your business.

They have to go to strange places, at all hours, and deal with the public on your behalf. Good ones strike a precarious balance between taking caring of your customer... and your coach.

Sometimes those needs contradict, like when the engine is overheating a mile from the destination. The driver can make your customers love a particular coach, or hate it. The job is half equipment operator, and half salesman.

Hiring and retaining good peo-



Dave Millhouser

ple is critical. Clearly, every trip needs a driver, but another benefit of having plenty of good operators is that you can discipline the marginal ones, and have more freedom to recognize superior performers.

Having too few good operators gives the poorest ones too much

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Operators wail, search for solutions

Blame the economy. The image. The wages. The hours. The recruiting. Add in age requirements, insurance factors, and an attitude by more than a few job seekers who don't really want to work.

There is no shortage of reasons why motorcoach operators across the U.S. and Canada face a shortage of qualified drivers. Owners and managers relate driver recruiting experiences that would be laughable were they not so shocking and even sad.

Even so, some operators plagued by the driver dilemma have come up with suggestions for recruiting and retaining a quality driver force.

Michael Kraft of Kraftours in Tulsa laments: "The applicants we're getting are so bad I would

rather see my coaches in the parking lot. The quality of applicants is breathtakingly bad."

Kraft, who grew up in the bus industry, says, "The drivers I'm seeing these days, for whatever reason, are scary. One would imagine that when one is hoping to find a job and he's test driving a coach with one of the principals of the company, one might be on one's best behavior."

He tells of a school bus driver who settled behind the wheel of one of Kraft's coaches for a test drive and said he was used to driving automatic transmissions.

"I told him this coach was automatic," Kraft says. "Then he asks me whether the pedal to the right of the steering wheel is the clutch. I told him, 'Typically we refer to that as the brake. The one next to it

is the throttle or gas pedal.' I was doing my best to assure him it was an automatic."

Kraft pauses and says: "I could teach an orangutan to drive an automatic gear box coach and have the same amount of body damage. It's unbelievable."

Making an impression

Speaking of unbelievable, Kraft tells of one applicant who never got the bus out of the company parking lot. He rolled over railroad ties that line the driveway.

Another applicant was able to maneuver out of the parking lot for his road test, and then he took off "like a bat out of hell," says Kraft. "Mrs. Kennedy's ride to the hospital in Dallas could not have been as harrowing. I thought I was on a fire

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Congress likely will get bill requiring greater occupant protection in motorcoaches

WASHINGTON — The charter bus crash that killed five members of an Ohio college baseball team in March has triggered a push for federal legislation that would require motorcoaches be equipped with improved passenger protection systems, possibly even seatbelts.

U.S. Rep. Paul Gillmor, R-Ohio, is working on a law that would mandate new safety measures for passengers of commercial coaches and his bill could be ready for introduction before the end of the month.

"We are discussing legislation but it is too early to talk about it right now," said Brad Mascho, the congressman's communications director. He added, however, that if the discussions progress well a bill could be introduced within weeks.

For the past two decades, the

motorcoach industry has consistently opposed any mandate for seatbelts in over-the-road buses absent research by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration that determines seatbelts or other restraint systems will in fact improve motorcoach passenger safety, and establish standards for any restraint systems required on buses.

In other words, the industry is asking that regulators rely on science and not supposition in considering safety improvements. The industry favors testing to examine all aspects of occupant restraint and protection, including seat design and other interior components, roof strength, and window glazing, and the development of standards for new systems that are found effective

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Watch out for 'hypermilers'

A highly dangerous automobile driving practice that is being publicized and, in some cases, promoted on the Internet could have potentially serious consequences for motorcoach companies and their drivers.

The practice is called "hypermiling" and it involves auto, SUV and light-truck drivers adopting driving practices aimed at squeezing as much mileage as they can out of a gallon of gasoline.

One of the more dangerous practices employed by hypermilers is to draft behind oversize vehicles like commercial buses and trucks. The drafting is similar in nature to that used by drivers in NASCAR car races.

Of course, it's illegal but that often doesn't stop dedicated hypermilers.

Websites dedicated to hypermiling have sprung up — just Google "hypermiling" to find them. Most of the Websites publicize hypermiling and many of its more benign aspects, like keeping tires properly inflated, accelerating moderately and driving within the speed limit.

But some also touch on its more hazardous aspects, like coasting, shutting down the engine while driving, and drafting oversize vehicles.

Coach industry safety directors should make their drivers aware of the practice and warn them to watch out for nutty hypermilers.

Police, commercial vehicle trade groups and others are contacting the Websites about the more dangerous aspects of the fad and working to educate drivers about safe following distances.

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FLEET FORWARD TRANSPORT SOLUTIONS

District of Columbia trip fee has coach industry in a snit

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The motorcoach industry is poised to power up a campaign to get officials in the District of Columbia to drop a controversial plan to require charter and tour buses to obtain short-term trip permits to bring tourists into the nation's capital.

The city's transportation department plans to begin enforcing the measure Aug. 1, just as the summer tourism season reaches its peak.

"This is a penny wise and a pound foolish decision on their part," said Victor Parra, president and chief executive of the United Motorcoach Association. "It's just not a smart move at all."

The measure, which was buried in a motor vehicles safety act adopted by the D.C. City Council last year, requires coach operators to pay \$50 for a six-day permit for each one of their motorcoach that enters the district. The annual cost to large companies that make numerous trips to the district could top \$100,000, making it prohibitive for many operators.

As an alternative, the measure allows operators to buy a "proportional registration" from their home state each year and pay the district a fee based on the number of visits each coach makes to the district. Industry executives panned that idea, too, saying it would be too complicated to work.

UMA and the American Bus Association both oppose the new fees, calling them simply a tax on motorcoach operations and saying they plan to vigorously fight them, including taking legal action.

"We are prepared and willing to go to court if necessary," said Peter Pantuso, president and chief executive of the ABA, who charged that the fees were "nothing but a money grab" and "completely illegal."

Early estimates of the amount of new revenue the fees could produce for the district each year are more than \$1 million.

Parra and Pantuso both have met separately with city transportation officials to plead their cases, but so far have succeeded only in getting them to move the enforcement date of the measure forward to Aug. 1 from July 1. Rescinding the action, they said, actually would have to come from the city council.

"We hope by then they will come to the realization that this is no way to welcome visitors," said Pantuso.

During the talks, he said, city

officials first claimed the trip fee was to help pay for wear and tear on the city's streets and then later said it was due to environmental concerns. Pantuso countered by noting that heavy trucks cause much more wear and tear on the streets and pointing out that recent studies show that motorcoaches emit less carbon emissions than any other mode of transportation, including cars, transit buses and trains.

Parra stressed that the "proportional registration" alternative offered by the district is pretty much unworkable because it would be too difficult for operators with large fleets to track the number of times each coach crosses into the district. "That would be easy for buses that run regular routes, but not for motorcoaches because they go all over the place," he noted.

While the fees could bring the district new dollars, they also could backfire, according to Parra, who suggested they could make or break some trips and possibly lead to tour groups bypassing the area for other popular charter destinations.

"This is really going to discourage tourists," he said. "The city is making an effort to attract tourists and this is sort of negating those

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 ▶

Washington drop-offs back... for now

WASHINGTON D.C. — Motorcoach and tour bus drivers may drop-off passengers at the national museums along the Capitol Mall as long as they do not idle too long and leave the area after the last rider gets off.

That's the latest word from U.S. Park Police, which indicated it was not aware of reports the National Park Service no longer was allowing buses to discharge passengers on the mall. (See June 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

"If they drop people off and then pull right out, that should not be an issue," said police spokesman Sgt. Robert Lachance, whose agency enforces parking regulations along the mall.

He said drivers are allowed — at this time — to discharge their passengers at designated drop-off locations on Madison and Jefferson drives as long as they do not violate other traffic regulations, including those that limit to three

minutes the time a bus may idle and prohibit parking in designated drop-off locations.

Chuck Andrews of World Strides, the largest operator of Washington D.C. tours for students, said last month that contract drivers employed by his company had complained that police were issuing tickets for dropping off at the museums and advising them that the only place they could drop-off now was at the Indian Museum at the east end of the mall.

"They have stopped issuing tickets now and we don't know why," he said. "They have been very silent about it."

It's possible the drivers were ticketed for idling too long or not hot-footing it out of drop-off points after discharging passengers. Drivers sometimes park for brief periods in drop-off spots to allow passengers to leave the coach and take photographs, which could subject them to traffic citations.

While a formal announcement was never made of a ban on dropping off passengers at individual museums, Bill Line, a spokesman for the park service, acknowledged last month that for security reasons some changes had been made to drop-off and parking rules, but he said he was not prepared to discuss them in any detail.

Instead, he said a press release would have to be prepared and would be issued within a few days. None was released on the issue, however, and Line later sent a release that was issued in March that told of the southside access to the Lincoln Memorial reopening to tour buses following the construction of a drop-off location for the Lincoln and Korean War memorials. (See story and map on Page 6.)

Line was on vacation earlier this month and not available to comment on the latest developments.

Ford's Theatre closes for renovations

WASHINGTON — Ford's Theatre, site of President Abraham Lincoln's assassination and one of Washington's most popular tourist stops, closed early this month for an 18-month renovation.

The theater, on 10th St. NW, is getting an \$8.5 million upgrade that includes its first elevator, new restrooms, and renovations to the

heating, air conditioning, lighting and sound systems.

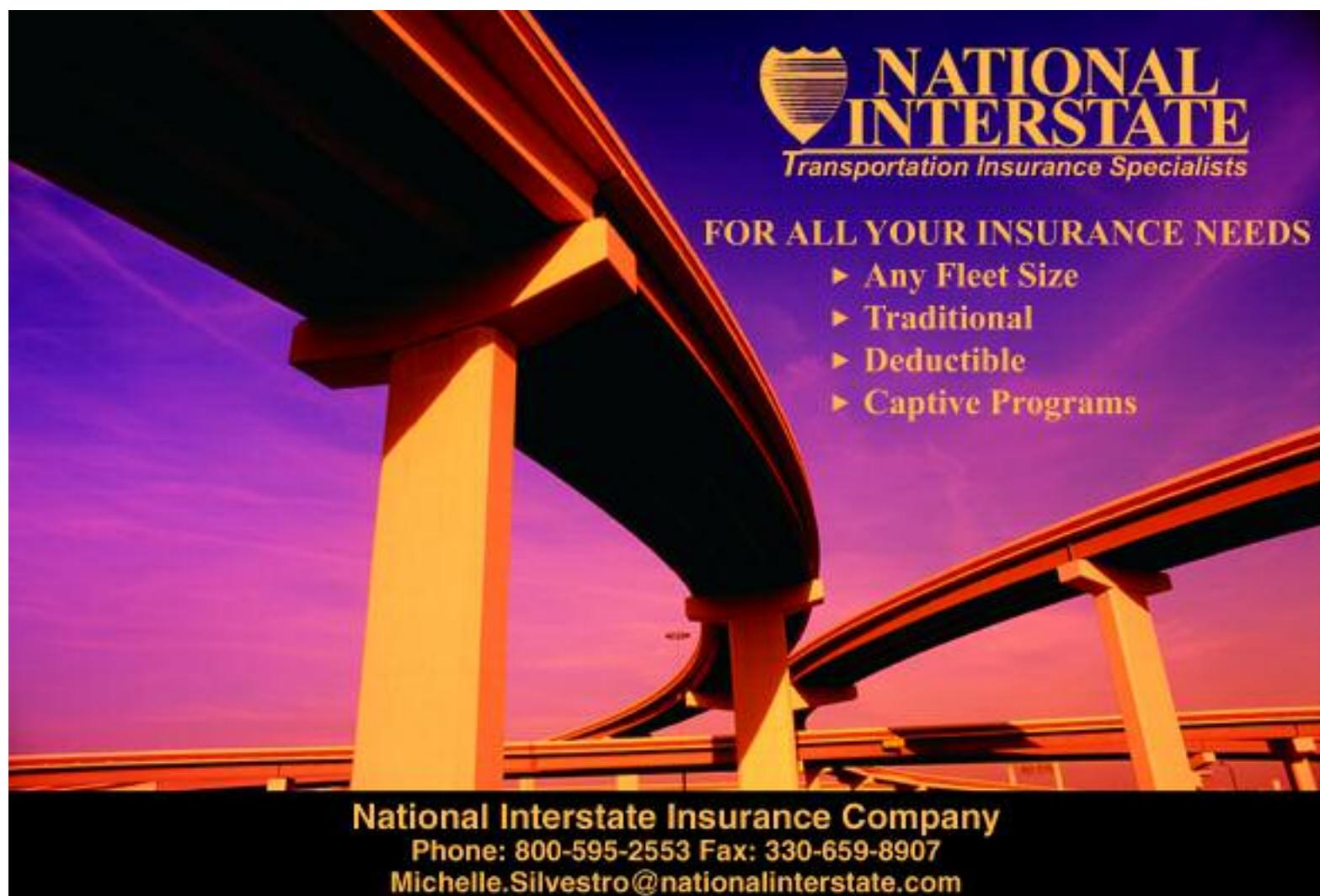
The National Park Service said it will be the biggest renovation to the 144-year-old theater since it underwent restoration in the 1960s.

It is being done, according to a spokesman, to improve access for the disabled and to enhance and

modernize the building.

Petersen House, the home across the street where Lincoln died, remains open to tourists from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. There is no admission fee to visit the house.

The Park Service hopes to reopen the theater in November 2008. About one million people visit it each year.



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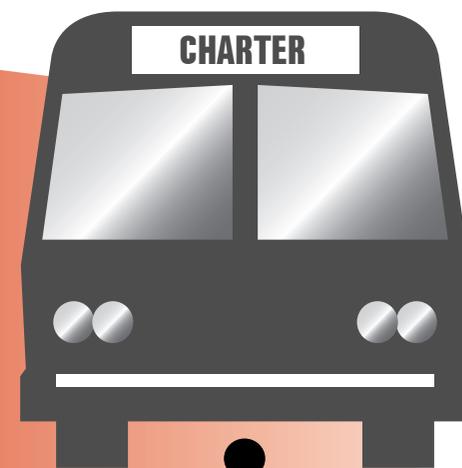
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THE DOCKET

Popularity of electronic traffic tickets grows in U.S.

In the age of the computer, the Internet and wireless communication, it was bound to happen.

One of life's most maddening irritants — getting a traffic ticket — is going digital as states adapt computer technology to enforce road rules.

Washington has become the latest state to join the e-ticket trend. It's outfitting several patrol cars with devices that permit traffic citations to be processed electronically.

The technology allows a police officer or highway patrolman to scan a violator's driver license and registration, generate a citation and transmit it wirelessly for processing. The only paper produced is a driver's copy printed at the scene of the traffic stop.

Washington's program is part of an effectiveness study backed by Gov. Chris Gregoire and is expected to expand statewide eventually.

On the other side of the country, "eventually" is now.

The Maryland General Assem-

bly, which wrapped up its 2007 session in April, agreed to take the Free State's "e-citation" program statewide before adjourning.

From a law enforcement standpoint, the e-ticket trend appears to offer many advantages, including more accuracy and efficiency besides saving time, money, even lives. Citations that previously might have been thrown out in court because of human error or illegibility (10 percent of all citations, according to a University of Pittsburgh Law study) are likelier to stick. Many e-citation systems also include a feature that alerts officers when they are incorrectly filing information.

Proponents also claim time saved through electronic citations lets police spend more time patrolling. A study by Itronix, an e-ticket device manufacturer, showed police officers spend on average 15 minutes issuing paper citations, and the slowest part of the process was the six to nine minutes writing the ticket by hand.

Itronix officials said e-citations cut time spent issuing tickets by 44 percent.

Safety is yet another selling point.

In 2005, 16 officers were struck and killed by a passing vehicle while writing a traffic ticket. Streamlining the process will lower the risk of such accidents, e-ticket proponents say.

In addition, some e-citation programs do not require a driver's signature, reducing the possibility for conflict between officers and motorists.

Janet Ray, spokeswoman for the American Automobile Association's Washington state division, supports the technology, saying the system may help identify people driving with suspended licenses and without insurance.

"Maybe this is a way of streamlining the entire system and identifying people who shouldn't be driving, who will be taken off the road right then and there," she said.

Alabama, Idaho, Maryland and Wisconsin join Washington state in adopting the program this year.

Some states are pushing the traffic technology even further, allowing drivers to pay tickets online. Drivers need only enter their ticket number to find out the cost of the violation, and they can then pay the fine by credit card.

Some of the devices that generate e-citations let police scan a motorist's fingerprints into a database. Officers making a traffic stop also can use audio, video and photographs to capture the specifics of an infraction, reducing the likelihood drivers can successfully contest their citations.

Engine builders, truckers encourage EPA to standardize diagnostic rules

WASHINGTON — Diesel engine manufacturers and the trucking industry are urging the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to step in and harmonize pending federal and California onboard diagnostics rules.

The two groups believe that "without (EPA) leadership, disharmonized (onboard diagnostic) requirements could adversely lead to the California standard becoming a de facto national standard, should California requirements be more stringent than federal standards."

Late last year, the EPA proposed a regulation that would require diesel engine manufacturers to phase in devices that would constantly monitor the performance of their reduced-emissions engines, starting in 2010. Beginning in 2013, all over-the-road bus and truck engines would have to meet the requirements.

Meanwhile, California developed its own proposed onboard diagnostic rule. Both the federal rule and the California version would require over-the-road trucks and buses to be equipped with onboard diagnostic systems that

exceed what manufacturers currently provide.

Under the Clean Air Act, California can enforce its own emission regulations if it receives a federal waiver, and other states have the right to choose California's emission standards over federal standards.

The proposed California and U.S. regulations are similar, "but the CARB regulation is more stringent, with tougher failure thresholds" for the devices, said a spokesman for the California Air Resources Board. "If there is a problem with an emissions control system, the CARB standard would require that the OBD system detect the issue sooner than the federal standard would."

The Engine Manufacturers Association says if California is allowed to proceed on its own, before EPA finalizes its nationwide rule, "states may perceive that there is a need for them to opt in to the California rule."

"A state-by-state opt-in... could have disastrous consequences for the heavy-duty engine and vehicle industry... as it would, among other things,

require manufacturers to label, distribute and track engine products meeting California requirements in some states and federal requirements in others," the association of engine makers said.

"EPA can, and must, do what is necessary to minimize such an adverse result," the association added.

But CARB contends that its onboard diagnostic regulation gives manufacturers sufficient lead time to develop and implement new onboard diagnostic systems, allowing them to gain experience "on a smaller number of engines prior to wide-scale implementation."

That's not good enough for truckers. "We want to make sure that (California and federal) onboard diagnostics proposals are consistent with each other," said an environmental affairs official with the American Trucking Associations.

"We want the same requirements for manufacturers" across the nation, "so they can produce a single U.S. truck, and not have to comply with two different standards."

Transits seek charter firms

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 take the time to respond to these notices.

St. Johnsbury, Vt. Deadline: June 24, 2007. Write to: Mary Grant, Executive Director, Rural Transportation Services Inc., 492 Bay St., St. Johnsbury, VT 05819. Phone: (802) 748-8170.

Jefferson County and Olympic Peninsula, Wash. Deadline:

July 1, 2007. Write to: David Turissini, General Manager, Jefferson Transit, 1615 W. Sims Way, Port Townsend, WA 98368. Phone: (360) 385-3020.

Metro Lubbock, Texas. Deadline: July 2, 2007. Write to: John L. Wilson, General Manager, Citibus/City Transit Management Co. Inc., P.O. Box 2000, Lubbock, TX 79457. Phone: (806) 712-2000.

Daviess County, Ky. Deadline: July 3, 2007. Write to: Louis Lindsay, Transit Manager, City of Owensboro, P.O. Box 10003, Owensboro, KY 42302-9003. Phone: (270) 687-8570.

How to buy B20 biodiesel

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — The National Biodiesel Board is advising commercial vehicle operators to buy biodiesel only from a trusted source because there's generally no easy-to-spot, at-the-pump certification.

The trade group also issued the following recommendations for buying B20 blend biodiesel:

Buy fuel that is already blended. This will help assure the fuel

has been properly handled and treated for climatic needs.

Biodiesel is a cleaning agent, which means petroleum deposits may end up in the fuel filter until the vehicle fuel system is clean. Stick to your regular maintenance schedule unless your vehicle feels sluggish when accelerating. This is a symptom of a plugged fuel filter and should be checked immediately.

Never buy from someone making biofuel in a garage or backyard.

The board recommends that interested fleet operators check the list of registered marketers at www.biotrucker.com, or by calling (866) 246-3437.

Meanwhile, all diesel fuel sold in Portland, Ore., will be required to contain at least 5 percent

biodiesel beginning July 1.

The standard applies to fuel sold in Portland for use by on-road vehicles. It does not apply to diesel sold in Portland and subsequently transported outside the city.

In 2010, the biodiesel requirement will increase to 10 percent.

The new standard also requires that all gasoline sold in the city

contain at least 10 percent ethanol by Nov. 1.

Earlier this year, the Oregon House approved a bill that included a requirement that at least a 2-percent biodiesel blend be offered as soon as state production of biodiesel reaches 5 million gallons per year. (See May 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Study makes case for fuel taxes, eyes bus exemptions

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — A new study by the American Transportation Research Institute says there are viable alternatives to tolling and privatization for funding future highway construction.

The study also identifies losses exceeding \$900 million annually in transportation funding resulting from state and federal fuel tax exemptions, including exemptions granted for transit, school and intercity buses.

The loss from fuel tax exemptions is just one of several implications for future highway funding explored in the study by ATRI, the research arm of the trucking industry.

The research was developed in response to numerous state and federal efforts to pursue tolling and highway privatization as the

answer to coping with the nation's transportation funding shortfall.

It is among the first research to propose options to tolling and privatization, and to examine highway funding from a system user perspective.

The study notes that while collection costs for fuel taxes range from 3 percent to less than 1 percent of revenue, ATRI has documented toll collection revenue-to-cost ratios exceeding 21 percent. In other words, it costs more than 20 cents to collect every dollar generated by some tolling systems.

"Every state legislator needs to understand that tolling is not an efficient way to improve transportation," said one trucking industry association executive.

The study also highlights the

threat to rural America posed by the push toward tolling and privatization. Rural corridors lack the necessary population densities and financial base to attract private-sector investors focused on profit.

Yet, these same corridors are critical links in the U.S. highway system, providing essential connectivity between states and metropolitan areas.

The research contends the USDOT mission of providing a seamless transportation network requires holistic funding strategies that assure continued support of rural corridors rather than focusing solely on high-traffic metropolitan routes.

"Pursuing funding strategies that knowingly fragment our national transportation system is

simply bad business," said one trucking logistics executive.

The ATRI study contends the motor fuel tax is the most efficient and equitable method for raising road revenues, and it recommends continued use of fuel taxes as the primary strategy for increasing transportation funding for the short- to mid-term.

To meet the increasing needs, ATRI's research recommends increasing the fuel tax in conjunc-

tion with elimination of fuel tax exemptions and diversions from the highway trust fund.

The study identifies an additional \$10 billion to \$38 billion that could be raised in annual revenues for highway infrastructure.

A copy of the study's executive summary is available at www.atri-online.org/research/results/economicanalysis/index.htm, where a copy of the full report also can be requested.

Missouri extends sales tax exemption

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — Missouri Gov. Matt Blunt is expected to sign legislation adopted by both houses of the state legislature that extends its sales and use tax exemption for common carrier rolling stock.

The Missouri exemption applies to equipment registered for at least 24,000 pounds gross weight for either intrastate or interstate use.

The bill, if signed, will be effective Aug. 28.

Park Service promotes use of new Lincoln Memorial stops

WASHINGTON — The National Park Service is encouraging tour bus operators to make use of newly reconstructed Daniel French Drive and 23rd Street S.W., on the south side of the Lincoln Memorial, for passenger pick-up and drop-off.

The areas along 23rd Street and Daniel French Drive are available for tour bus use at all times, with no rush-hour restrictions.

There also is drop-off and pick-up on Henry Bacon Drive on the Memorial's north side. How-

ever, during evening rush hour, pick-ups and drop-offs are not permitted on Henry Bacon.

Plus, there is nearly twice as much combined drop-off space on Daniel French Drive and 23rd Street as there is along Henry Bacon Drive.

The Daniel French and 23rd Street stops provide easy access to both the Lincoln and Korean War memorials, while the Henry Bacon Drive stop is close to the Vietnam Veterans, as well as the Lincoln, memorials.

DC fee

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

efforts."

He pointed out that a trip fee charged by Atlantic City was partially to blame for charter traffic in the city dropping from 1,100 buses a day to about 700.

Pantuso agreed that the fees could be a blow to the district's tourism promotion campaign and cost it valuable tourism dollars. "They have the convention and visitors people trying to bring in tourists and the transportation department trying to grab extra dollars from the same people who are being encouraged to go there," he said.

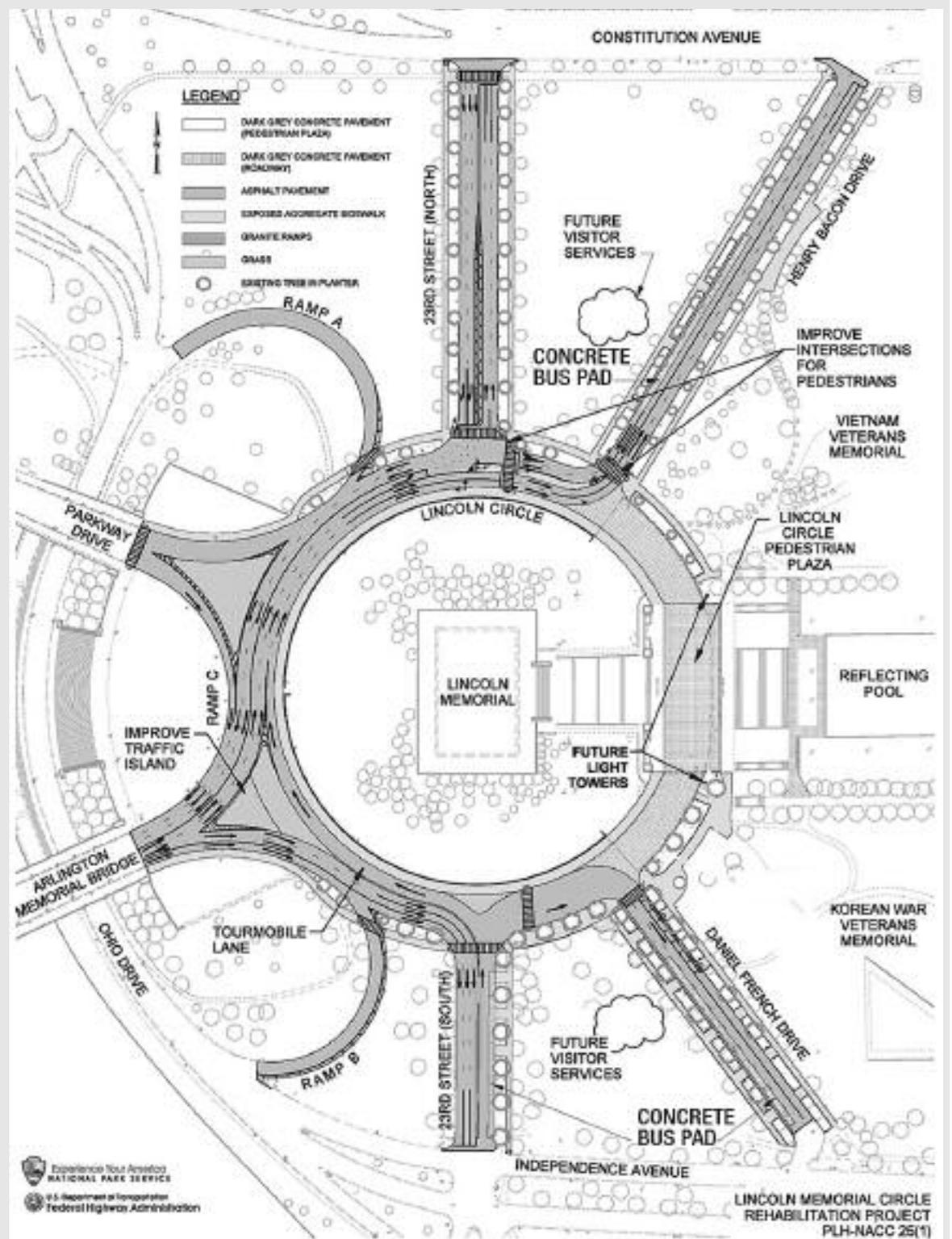
The possible impact the fees could have on tourism in the district has caught the eye of at least one councilmember, Kwame R. Brown, an at-large Democrat who chairs the council's economic development committee, which is

responsible for the oversight of the city's Convention and Tourism Corporation.

Brown, his communications director, LaToya Foye, said, was not aware of the fees until recently. "And now that he knows about it, he plans to look into it, although he has not made up his mind about it one way or the other," Foye added.

Parra also noted that the fees will cut into the profit margin of many motorcoach operators. He said coach companies will have to eat the \$50 trip fees for district charters that they already have booked and for which advances have been paid. "And you can't recoup those costs."

While industry executives hope to convince the district to drop the plans short of going to court, there is precedent for taking legal action. In 1998, the district abandoned a similar fee after the ABA filed suit against it. "We could do it again," said Pantuso.



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7 tips for keeping the family business in the family

The motorcoach industry is rich with family businesses. Here's how to keep it that way.

Don Zinyk, a partner with KPMG, the global network of professional firms providing audit, tax and advisory services, says there are seven key factors that must be addressed to successfully pass your transportation business from family elders to the next generation — with a minimum of heartache.

1. Ask tough questions

With the most important question being: Who's going to take over? "If you've got more than one sibling working in the business, it's very unlikely you're going to have joint control. At the end of the day, somebody's got to be president," says Zinyk.

In his practice, Zinyk interviews all stakeholders, including key nonfamily employees, then presents a report pointing out areas where there's consensus and divergence. "I've done plans where after you talk to mom and dad and siblings, there is unanimity on who should lead the next generation, but that's rare.

"The family should be asking itself what it wants to accomplish, what's best for the business? Too many people go into succession planning motivated by taxes, instead of sitting back and asking 'what's the best thing we can do to ensure the business survives to the next generation.'"

2. Open communication

To help facilitate communication, Zinyk suggests setting up a "family council" — a mechanism with simple rules of order. It has to be a forum that allows all family

members to speak up without fear of repercussion. Often an outside mediator can help things along for the first year.

"Everyone in the family should take turns chairing the meetings, setting the agenda, etc.," says Zinyk, "asking fundamental questions such as how much cash the family wants out of the business; family values and how the business is consistent with those values; philanthropy — anything that impacts the family as a result of the business."

3. Get your legal house in order

In many transitions, stakeholders will play around with the boxes in the organizational chart and won't bother to change the buy-sell agreement or the will to correspond with the changes.

"This is really a matter of ensuring all your i's are dotted, so if something happens you've got a legal document to fall back on that will stand up in court," says Zinyk.

A succession plan can take three to five years but you can't wait that long to assure the founder's will is going to cause what you want to have happen, to happen.

"I look at the key elements: will, buy-sell agreement, and we'll do a quick and dirty (succession plan). If it's not good enough to get us five years down the road, then we'll change it, knowing we'll change it again once the process is complete. It's a temporary document to tide us over till things are done, and as you get towards the end and can see what the final picture looks like, then you ensure your final documentation is consis-

tent with your final picture."

4. Build the successor's business skills

This is too often neglected in succession plans. The founder figures the son or daughter comes from the right gene pool, has been trained under them for several years, and is good to go for the take over.

'You have to come to a consensus with the outgoing leader as to how much involvement they want.'

"I encourage clients to look at it this way: If you were to hire professional management to run the business, what sort of skill set would you want? They map out the skills of their dream executive and then take the skill set of the identified successor and identify his skills, and compare them to the dream exec — then look at the gaps," says Zinyk.

"Are the gaps something that could be filled by having a strong CFO, or human relations person? Or, are they gaps that require more training or more exposure to different parts of the business? It's basically coming up with a plan to ensure the successor is as well equipped as he or she can possibly be for the day they take over."

Many of Zinyk's clients insist their kids work outside the family for a while before they're admitted into the business. "It proves to

everyone, including the successor, that they can make it for themselves, getting by on their talents and not their name. It does so much for the confidence of the individual, plus it gives them a better perspective on the industry."

5. Getting nonfamily buy-in

This one isn't key in all situations but if you've got nonfamily employees that are critical to the success of the business, then it's crucial that these people are on side if there's to be a change in leadership. It's mostly a matter of finding out their concerns, ensuring they're looked after financially, and addressing any doubts as to what the change means for them. "If it's not handled properly you could lose people you really don't want to lose."

6. Funding for retirement

Critical to the success of all transition plans is finding a way to get the parents' wealth out of the business without forcing the next generation into financial strain. This is a real challenge and unfortunately it's where too many start the transition process — it should be left until the end.

Zinyk says there are numerous ways to accomplish moving mom and dad's cash out of the business. Freezes can be arranged that allow ownership to transfer, but the parents still have some control until they're paid out. Plus, there are private equity groups — banks and private equity pools — who are happy to help finance succession for a piece of the action. "They put money up, and take a certain percentage of the profits through a

specific class of shares that can be redeemable upon certain benchmarks being hit so the family can get it back."

7. Define the current leader's future role

If someone's been running a business for 30 years, people identify as such.

"But when they know they have to retire, they're scared silly as to who they're going to be once they step down as president of the business," says Zinyk. "If it's a man, being a typical male, a whole bunch of his identity is wrapped up in his role, and if he doesn't have the role, he doesn't know who he is. What role is he going to fulfill after the transition?"

"There are too many situations where dad comes into the office occasionally and talks to the old employees. They start complaining about something Junior's doing and dad jumps to remedy it — suddenly Junior's in a position where everything is being second guessed. Why does it happen? Because Dad doesn't have a role."

One successful family set up a board of advisers and made their retired father the chairman. "It functioned much like a board of directors; the siblings would make quarterly reports and the founder got to ask questions and it worked really well. Another client made dad the director of training where he continued to have a specific role in the business.

"But it's got to be a two-way street. You have to come to a consensus with the outgoing leader as to how much involvement they want."

Reprinted from Today's Trucking.

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Youth groups to get free ride to pro football shrine

CANTON, Ohio — Thousands of children will be riding motorcoaches to visit the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton thanks largely to the largess of Pro Football Hall of Fame Coach John Madden, the celebrity spokesman for Motor Coach Industries.

Madden has directed that

money from the John Madden Hall of Fame Education Foundation be used exclusively to underwrite the transportation cost of school teams and youth groups that might not otherwise have the financial means to travel to the Hall of Fame.

The Hall of Fame, through its educational outreach program,

offers free or reduced rates to schools and youth groups but many can't afford the cost of getting there.

"Now, through Madden's gesture, the program can reach an even greater number of youths," said Jerry Csaki, Hall of Fame educational programs coordinator.

Madden, who holds a degree in education, said history is being lost on today's kids.

"With this program, qualified schools, boys and girls clubs, camps, and underprivileged children will be able to come to the Hall of Fame to learn about our history," said Madden.

Motorcoach operators wanting to learn more about the program, or other Hall of Fame activities, should contact hall staff member Tonja Marshall by e-mail at Tonja.Marshall@profootballhof.com, or call (330) 456-8207, or visit the Hall's Website at www.profootballhof.com.

MCI wraps up Grand Tour II

SCHAUMBURG, Ill. — Motor Coach Industries wrapped up its spring promotional event, called Grand Tour II, late last month after visiting 21 cities in the U.S. and Canada, and reaching more than 1,000 potential customers along the way.

MCI conducted one-day events at local MCI Sales and Service Centers, Caterpillar facilities, and a number of special locations, including MCI's new National Training Center in Louisville, Ky.; Fenway Park in Boston, and Atlanta's newest tourist attraction, The Georgia Aquarium.

Each stop included educational workshops, test drives of MCI coaches with 2007 EPA-compliant engines, prize giveaways, catered lunch, vendor displays and networking opportunities.

The educational sessions consisted of workshops on the '07 reduced-emissions engines, electronic diagnostics, and demonstrations on MCI's driving simulator.

Co-sponsors included Caterpillar, ZF, Amaya-Astron, Arvin-Meritor, Michelin, Industrial Rubber/TARABUS, MCI Financial Services, United Motorcoach Assoc.

People

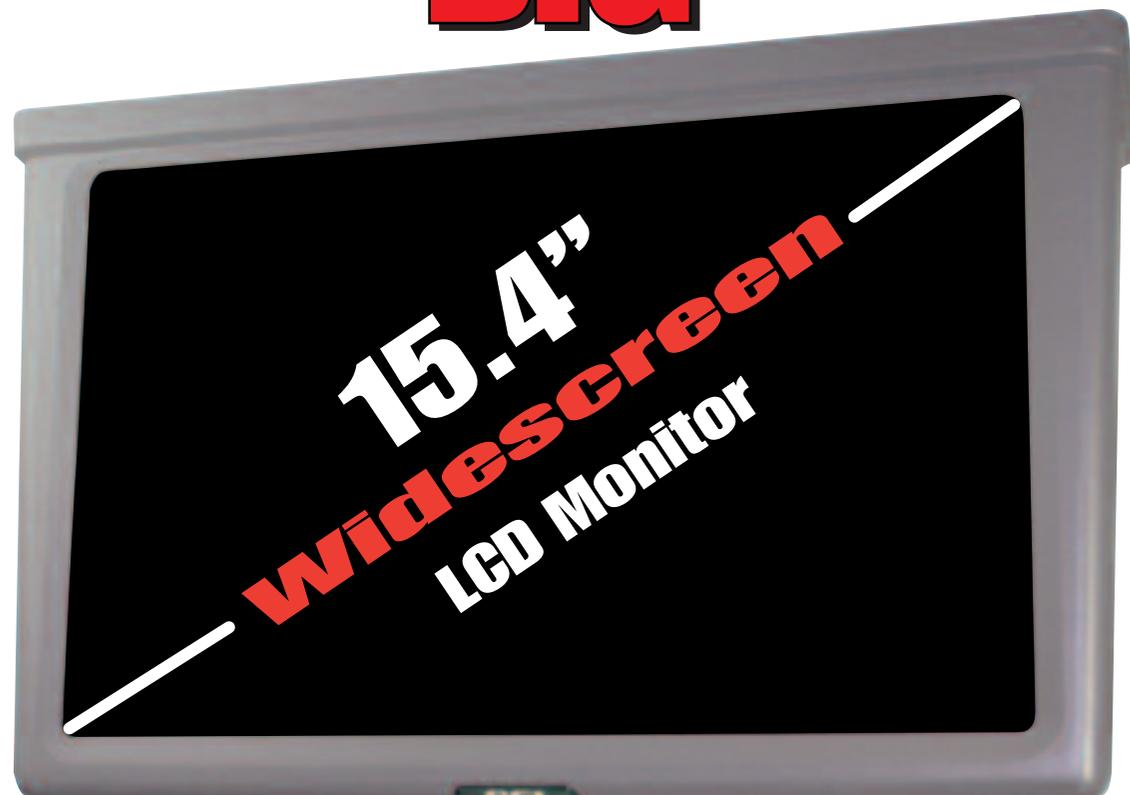
Karen Sanders of Bus Supply Charters in McComb, Miss., has been appointed to serve as vice president of the **South Central Motorcoach Association**. She fills the position vacated by **Louis Sanders of Louisiana Coaches Trailways**.

Karen Sanders previously has served as a director of the Louisiana Motorcoach Association and the South Central Motorcoach Association.

Since the South Central Association was formed as the Louisiana Motorcoach Association four years ago, the number of coach operator members has doubled to 23 and the number of associate members has mushroomed to nearly 120.

The association represents operators in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma and Texas.

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Seatbelts

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and become requirements.

The industry has largely aligned itself with the National Transportation Safety Board which issued a call to federal agencies nearly a decade ago to develop protection performance standards for motorcoach occupant protection systems. To date, the only research that has been done is testing that was completed earlier this year by safety agencies in the U.S. and Canada on coach window glazing and roof strength.

The basic conclusion of that research was that more research was needed before any regulations related to the two issues were developed.

Reasonable approach

There are indications, however, that the effort by Rep. Gillmor will contain elements that have the potential of making it acceptable to the industry, especially when compared with the occupant protection proposals that are gaining ground in some states around the country.

Rather than simply mandating seatbelts, the legislation being discussed by the congressman is believed to contain wording that

would require the federal government to conduct studies of alternatives to seatbelts, including passive restraints, such as air bags, improved window glazing, and roof strength.

Such a requirement would match the industry's position that before anyone mandates seatbelts, the NHTSA should conduct extensive research and testing that not only looks at seatbelts but considers alternatives, too.

In March, the chairman of the NTSB, Mark Rosenker, testified before the House Subcommittee on Highways and Transit that from past investigations the NTSB had concluded that keeping occupants within the vehicle is paramount to their protection.

"In addition, the vehicle itself must be strong enough to prevent intrusion into the occupant compartment. Finally, the seats, side panels and other surfaces need to absorb energy when impacted by occupants in the crash scenario. When all of these concepts work together, it greatly increases the occupants' chance of survival," Rosenker told members of Congress.

Are seatbelts the answer?

Asked if seatbelts would be a safety enhancement on motor-

coaches, Rosenker responded, that "the jury is still out," meaning that appropriate testing has yet to be done to determine the best methods for improving occupant protection.

The action at the federal level comes at a time when numerous states are considering seatbelt laws that could impact both the school bus industry and motorcoach operators. Texas is the latest to join the campaign. The governor of Texas is expected to sign legislation requiring seatbelts on all new school buses starting in 2010 and on motorcoaches that carry school children in 2011.

"While we would all likely prefer to see the status quo as the order of the day...it is likely the time, and this may well be the opportunity, to be proactive rather than reactive," suggested Ken Presley, vice president of the United Motorcoach Association.

"Nearly every day we are hearing discussions in states calling for the use of seatbelts, and plaintiff's attorneys are now gaining traction with juries questioning the rationale behind not affording seatbelts."

Gillmor's interest in protecting motorcoach passengers during an accident stems from the crash in early March involving the baseball team from Bluffton University,

Safety course next month

ASHBURN, Va. — The National Transportation Safety Board, in collaboration with the Daecher Consulting Group Inc., will present a two-day course next month examining current safety issues involving motorcoaches, buses and 15-passenger vans.

The course is primarily designed for personnel in the passenger carrying industry who operate or use motorcoaches, buses or large vans.

While the course will focus on contemporary safety issues, it also will examine the interaction of the three dynamic elements within any accident sequence — operations, driver and vehicle.

Other topics will include an

overview of the NTSB and accident investigation procedures. NTSB case studies will be used to illustrate principles discussed in the class.

Registration by June 26 is \$700. The fee is \$1,000 for applications with payment received June 27–July 4. Applications submitted between July 5 and noon July 9 will be accepted with payment of a \$50 late fee.

The course will be at the NTSB training facility in Ashburn, Va., from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. July 10–11. For details, go to http://ntsb.gov/tc/courseinfo/hs101_2007.htm; e-mail, TrainingCenter@ntsb.gov, or call (571) 223-3900.

which is just outside the district he represents. Five players — some of whom were from his district — as well as the bus driver and the driver's wife died in the accident, which occurred when the bus plunged off a freeway bridge and landed in the middle of Interstate 75, just north of downtown Atlanta.

The bus was traveling in the high occupancy vehicle lane of the freeway when the driver came upon a second left side lane, which turned out to be an exit ramp that

went up a short grade and ended at a city street. The driver moved into the new lane and, still driving at highway speed, drove up the ramp, crossed the street and crashed through a retaining wall where the bus dropped 30 feet to the freeway below.

Investigators have speculated that the driver may have thought that the odd-side exit lane became the high occupancy vehicle lane and he moved over to it, not realizing that it was taking him off the freeway.

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ABC's new 3035RE model will feature components that are familiar to operators of larger coaches.

ABC to unveil rear-engine, 35-foot model next month

FARIBAULT, Minn. — ABC Companies and its partner, General Coach America, say they plan to unveil a prototype of their new 35-foot, rear-end coach late next month, and deliver the first production models a month later.

ABC revealed at Motorcoach Expo in January that it planned to launch a 35-foot, rear-end model for the North American market to compete with the influx of foreign-built 35-footers that have been introduced this year.

The new ABC coach, designated the 3035RE, will have a number of features and components familiar to operators of 45- and 40-foot over-the-road buses. These include:

- ZF independent front suspension
- Disc brakes
- Pantograph baggage and engine doors
- Carrier 05G A/C compressor
- 295-80R/22.5 Goodyear tires
- 280-cubic-foot, pass-through baggage bays

The bus will have a 20,000-pound rear-axle rating and the independent front suspension will per-

mit a 60-degree wheel cut, meaning a very tight turning radius.

ABC and General Coach have consulted with potential customers to get input about the design and features of the new midsize model.

Earlier this spring, the two companies hosted an on-site customer focus group at the General Coach plant in Imlay City, Mich., where they were able to gauge preliminary interest, field questions and listen to operator ideas.

“Our customers’ response was quite positive,” said Dane Cornell, president & CEO of ABC Companies.

“The on-site audit provided an excellent forum to probe customer interest and concerns, and to gather frontline input into how best to shape a product that truly adds more value to operations,” Cornell added.

ABC is targeting the end of July to release the 3035RE prototype with the first production units delivered in late August. Orders are currently being taken.

For more information, call (800) 222-2875.

NTA to have Destination Pavilion at show

LEXINGTON, Ky. — The National Tour Association is introducing a “Destination Pavilion” at its 2007 annual convention, “making it easier for buyers and sellers to connect.”

The NTA Annual Convention is Nov. 2-6 in Kansas City.

The Destination Pavilion will group DMOs and their partnering suppliers by geographic region, allowing tour operators to develop their products regionally. The pavilion will be available to tour operators throughout the convention, with a special event Nov. 2.

“Tour operators can now develop product more efficiently by meeting with both suppliers and destinations in one central location,” said NTA Chairman and CEO Randy Julian.

For information, contact NTA at (800) 682-8886.

The advertisement features several bus seat models arranged on a textured, light-colored background. Each seat is accompanied by a label in a stylized font:

- 2+1 BRASIL**: Shows two seats with a footrest.
- TORINO STANDARD**: Shows a blue patterned seat.
- TORINO VIP**: Shows a blue patterned seat with a footrest.
- PATRIOT**: Shows a light-colored seat with a footrest.
- FEATURES**: Shows a close-up of a seat's base and footrest mechanism.

At the bottom of the advertisement, the text reads: **THE BEST OPTION FOR YOU.**

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Buyout rumors swirl around Navistar International

WAREENVILLE, Ill. — Navistar International Corp., the parent of International Truck & Engine Co., appears to be a buyout target and its stock has risen as a result.

Potential buyers of Navistar, one of the largest U.S. makers of

medium- and heavy-duty trucks, plus small, midsize and school buses, include Germany's MAN AG and Italy's Fiat SpA, financial industry sources have reported.

In recent months, Navistar has been in a whirlwind of activity.

It was delisted by the New York Stock Exchange; it's in the midst of a serious feud with one of its major customers (Ford Motor Co.); it may be negotiating to buy the medium-size truck building operation of General Motors; it won a

big contract from the Marines, and it is a finalist for an even bigger, \$8 billion, military contract.

All this, plus the takeover talk, has resulted in a run-up of Navistar shares of about 85 percent this year.

Optima Bus plant closing in Kansas

PARK CITY, Kan. — North American Bus Industries Inc. is moving production of its Opus small transit buses from the Wichita area to its headquarters plant in Anniston, Ala.

The Park City facility is expected to be shut down and all 200+ employees let go by early August.

The move will allow NABI to consolidate its transit bus operations, including manufacturing, engineering and support, in Anniston.

Optima Bus LLC, formerly Chance Coach, was purchased by NABI last August. It has manufactured transit buses for more than 30 years. It builds the American Heritage Streetcar and the Opus 30- and 35-foot, low-floor transit buses at the plant in Park City, just outside Wichita.

NABI was purchased by Cerberus Capital Management in February of last year.

Chrysler buyer is big in buses

DETROIT — Largely lost in the hub-bub over the sale of DaimlerChrysler has been the bus industry connection.

Control of the carmaker was acquired by the private-equity firm Cerberus Capital Management LP, for an investment of \$7.4 billion plus the assumption of \$19 billion in retirement liabilities.

Cerberus is a hedge fund that purchased three mostly transit-bus manufacturers last year — North American Bus Industries, the transit and commuter bus producer; Optima Bus Corp., the transit and trolley bus maker, and Blue Bird Corp., the Georgia-based maker of school, transit and commuter buses, motorcoaches and high-end recreational vehicles.

Bandag bought by Bridgestone

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Bridgestone Americas Holding has completed the \$1.05 billion acquisition of Bandag Inc., the tire retreading company.

Former Bridgestone Americas Holding Vice President and General Counsel Saul Solomon has been named chairman, CEO and president of Bridgestone Bandag, the new operating name. Executives said the Bandag brand will not change and headquarters will remain in Muscatine, Iowa.

Former Bandag Chairman Martin Carver, whose family founded Bandag, said at a news conference that he is "going to take some time and see if I can get bored for a while."



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2000 LTC 40 executive 21 pass. 40 foot motor coach, Cummins/ B500 – 300K miles, galley, refrig., 2+1 luxury reclining leather seats, AC/DC at every seat, luxury lav, forward coat closet and magazine rack. Very nice corporate/exec bus. **\$139,900**



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UMA participates in nursing home hurricane summit

ST. PETE BEACH, Fla. — Leaders from the United Motorcoach Association attended the second annual Nursing Home Hurricane Summit here last month, and exchanged ideas with care home administrators on finding transportation for their residents during disasters.

Representing UMA at the two-day summit was association Chairman Brian Scott of Escot Bus Lines in Largo, Fla., Vice Chairman Godfrey Lebron of Paradise Trailways in New York, and Ken Presley, UMA vice president of industry relations.

Attending the conference were nursing home administrators and state emergency preparedness officials from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, and Texas.

Also on hand were representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other federal organizations.

"We first became interested in working with this group several months ago when we were introduced to them by Bob Watkins of Consolidated Safety Services," said Presley.

"No doubt it has been an education process for both administrative personnel from long-term, assisted-living caregivers and the motorcoach industry. There is at least some perception out there that our industry does not want to work with this market segment," said Presley.

"This shouldn't be this hard," said Scott. "Both long-term care facilities and operators need to sit down and understand the different 'trigger points' required in emergency evacuation and start planning," he said.

"I have a personal stake in safe and effective transportation of long-term care/assisted-living residents," said Lebron, "My mother is a resident of a nursing home and

while I am beginning to understand the needs of long-term care facilities, I also understand I want my mother to be safe and well cared for in the process."

Motorcoach companies and long-term care facilities "need to work together all year long," said Scott. "We should be looking at working with long-term care and assisted-living facilities as a year-long business opportunity and the facilities should develop relationships with passenger transportation providers."

During the meeting, Watkins of Consolidated Safety Services suggested that nursing homes buy buses retired by metropolitan transit authorities, such as New York, Atlanta or Chicago. Relatively cheap to buy, the buses could be maintained and driven for a fee by private bus companies, Watkins told the nursing home administrators.

The biggest advantage, he said, would be assurance that rides would be available when needed. "It's a common-sense solution to a very big problem," he said, adding that the buses typically cost \$2,000 or less each, and he estimated annual maintenance at less than \$1,000.

A key question, however, is who would pay for the buses.

Watkins said nursing homes could buy them and pay private bus companies to maintain their vehicles, or lease them to the firms on the condition they be available on call.

However, nursing home industry representatives argue that it makes more sense for the government to buy a fleet of used transit buses and make them available for emergency use.

"I think it's a viable consideration for FEMA," said one Florida nursing home official. "We think this should be a national response, instead of an individual (nursing

home) facility response."

The nursing home industry has expressed frustration with the federal government for signing contracts with private companies for the right to use hundreds of buses in an emergency. In addition, nursing home representatives say FEMA has reserved the right to take control of other buses if needed.

"We don't have (access to) enough buses in the first place," said Janice Zalen, a director with the American Health Care Association, a national organization of

long-term care facilities.

"If I learned anything during the summit," said Lebron, "it's that we, as an industry, must work harder and reach out to demonstrate we are part of the solution. As an industry, we have a societal responsibility."

A suggestion by Lebron that assisted-living communities charter a motorcoach monthly so residents, staff and families can get acclimated to coach travel was well received.

Many nursing homes said they

now include staff families and pets in their evacuation plans. Lebron proposed they also consider including the driver's family as well to assure the driver's availability.

Scott brought an Escot Bus Lines motorcoach and a transit-style bus to the summit so participants could inspect the differences and various applications.

"It was a great event," said Scott. "I'm truly looking forward to reaching out to this sector and developing an array of transportation options. That's what we do."

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Feds contracting with Amtrak for New Orleans' evacuations

WASHINGTON — The Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Emergency Management Agency intend to award a sole-source, fixed priced contract to Amtrak to provide emergency evacuation for up to 15,000 people from New Orleans.

The arrangement calls for Amtrak trains to transport New Orleans residents within 48 hours to Amtrak- and FEMA-agreed-upon stations in the event of an evacuation order.

Operation of the evacuation trains is to begin within 24 hours of

receiving notice of the need for evacuation services.

The contract will cover the remainder of this year.

In their joint announcement, the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA said that "without Amtrak services, American lives will be at risk in the event of a disaster like that caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005."

The announcement also said that "a determination by the (federal) government not to compete this effort is solely within the discretion of the (federal) government."



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Greyhound, union bargainers agree on three-year contract

DALLAS — Greyhound Lines Inc. reached a tentative contract agreement earlier this month with the union that represents about 3,300 of its U.S. workers, including nearly all of its drivers and about half of its mechanics.

The Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1700 said on its Web site that the deal will be presented to union members for a vote "as soon as possible."

At about the same time, Greyhound workers in Canada ended their week-long strike against the company, agreeing to a two-year contract.

Two months ago, U.S. Greyhound workers overwhelmingly rejected a contract proposal from Greyhound that company management had called its final offer.

The union said in a message to members posted on its Website that the new deal "is measurably better than any of the offers made before."

It is far better than the offer you wisely rejected in March." (See related story below.)

The agreement extends from June 1, 2007, through Jan. 31, 2010. Drivers will receive a 3 percent annual pay increase during the term of the agreement, while mechanics will see their pay rise by 75 cents an hour each year.

All employees will receive 3 percent back pay for wages earned between Feb. 1 and May 31.

In Canada, Greyhound bus drivers and mechanics narrowly voted to return to work, ending a strike that shut down intercity bus service across Western Canada.

Canadian workers ratified a deal by a margin of 51 percent — just 18 votes, said Jim Higgs, president of the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1374, which covers workers at Greyhound Canada from Vancouver to Ottawa.

"We have a divided workforce,

Greyhound to sell Hotard Coaches

NEW ORLEANS — Greyhound Lines reportedly is selling Hotard Coaches Inc. of New Orleans to an investment group headed by Callen Hotard of Calco Travel in Geismar, La., and Jim Szeszycki, the current president of Hotard Coaches.

The purchase agreement also calls for the Hotard-Szeszycki investment group to acquire Greyhound Travel Services of Los Angeles, which provides airport shuttle and other transportation services in the Long Beach and San Diego areas. That company is to be renamed Hotard Travel Services.

The deal is expected to be completed by the end of this

month; terms have not been disclosed.

Greyhound purchased the family-owned Hotard Coaches, a major operator in New Orleans for more than 40 years, eight years ago at a time Greyhound was expanding its shuttle and charter business in gateway cities.

At the time of the purchase, Hotard Coaches was under the leadership of Eva Hotard, a cousin of Callen Hotard.

Calco Travel, the coach company owned by Callen Hotard and his wife, Coleen, was founded as Hotard Bus Lines in 1935. It has a fleet of 40 vehicles.

The latest acquisition will return ownership of Hotard Coaches

to a member of the extended Hotard family. Callen Hotard's uncle, State Hotard, created the company that would become Hotard Coaches in 1960.

"Having the company under local ownership shows our support and confidence for New Orleans' recovery efforts," Szeszycki said in a statement. "I am excited for our employees and confident in the rebuilding of this city's hospitality industry."

Hotard Coaches operates 67 vehicles, including vans and coaches, in New Orleans and Baton Rouge, La., and Biloxi, Miss. Szeszycki said he expects the fleet to grow to about 70 by the end of the year.

that's why we're on strike," said Higgs.

A total of 884 Greyhound employees voted on the agreement.

The two-year deal will see employees get a 3 percent raise each year.

About 1,150 Greyhound em-

ployees walked off the job in late May in protest over negotiations on contracting out, working conditions and wages.

Thousands of travelers were left stranded or scrambling for alternative transportation right before the Victoria Day weekend, after pas-

senger and package service was suspended in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Service also was affected on routes from Winnipeg to Toronto and Ottawa in eastern Canadian provinces.

Highlights of tentative contract between Greyhound, union

DALLAS — The tentative contract between Greyhound Lines and its drivers and mechanics provides for annual raises of 3 percent for the next three years for drivers and 75 cents an hour for mechanics.

The deal also puts a cap on the number of miles the company can subcontract; increases the daily meal allowance for drivers; leaves current medical benefits largely untouched, and allows drivers to shed their uniform jackets when the temperature is above 75.

Additionally, it requires Greyhound to post the Amalgamated

Transit Union emblem on all of its buses.

The contract accord reached earlier this month, which is yet to be ratified by Greyhound drivers and mechanics, covers the period June 1, 2007, to Jan. 31, 2010.

However, all employees are getting back pay, amounting to 3 percent of wages earned between Feb. 1 and May 31 of this year.

For drivers, there is a 3 percent general wage increase right away, plus another early next year and a third in March 2009.

The top pay rates for drivers will be:

- June 1, 2007: \$20.86 hourly (61-cent raise)
- Feb. 1, 2008: \$21.48 (62-cent raise)
- March 1, 2009: \$22.13 (65-cent raise)
- For mechanics, the top wage rate at Greyhound's maintenance center in Richmond, Va., will be:
 - June 1, 2007-Jan. 31, 2008: \$19.68 hourly
 - Feb. 1, 2008-Feb. 28, 2009: \$20.43
 - March 1, 2009-Jan. 31, 2010: \$21.18

Wage rates for Greyhound mechanics in Atlanta and Char-

lotte, N.C. are roughly 20 cents an hour less than those paid in Richmond, and those in Jacksonville, Fla., are just over \$2 an hour less.

Other notable aspects of the contract say:

- The company must provide lockable union bulletin boards at all locations.
- The company can subcontract no more than 6 percent of 2006 miles.
- The new uniform hat for drivers is optional.
- The daily meal allowance is increased to \$24 per day, from

\$20, a 20 percent increase.

• The company will match dollar for dollar, up to \$1,200 annually, or 50 cents on the dollar up to 6 percent of wages, employee contributions to the company 401(k) plan.

The agreement also says that any company that buys Greyhound must honor the contract or the union may file suit in federal court.

Earlier this year, Greyhound's parent company, Laidlaw International of Naperville, Ill., agreed to be bought by British bus operator FirstGroup PLC for \$2.8 billion.

Feds alter travel rules; calls issued for more changes

WASHINGTON — The federal government's antiterrorism, cross-border travel rules came slightly unraveled earlier this month when the State Department was forced to suspend the requirement that U.S. residents flying to and from Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean have a passport.

The government took the action because a huge backlog of passport applications — fostered by the new rules — had upended the travel plans of thousands of Americans.

In the past, U.S. passports could generally be obtained in six weeks or so. In recent months, however, that time has more than doubled and in some cases it has stretched far longer.

Between now and Sept. 30, U.S.

citizens will be able to fly to Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean if they can show a receipt verifying they have applied for a passport, plus they will be subject to extra scrutiny at airports.

Some in the travel and tourism see the backlog created by the air travel requirement as a small fraction of what will occur when citizens are required — starting Jan 1 — to show passports or other documents to travel by land and sea across U.S. borders.

It's that possibility and the general concept that more rigorous security measures have become a major impediment to cross-border tourism that has prompted the National Tour Association and other travel organizations to seek

support for efforts to delay implementation of the rules that go into effect Jan. 1.

The NTA is asking travel professionals to contact their U.S. senators about co-sponsoring the Western Hemisphere Travel Improvement Act, which would modify the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative that requires a passport or similar document for anyone crossing the U.S.-Canadian border by bus, auto or truck starting in January.

Introduced by Sens. Norm Coleman, R-Minnesota, and Susan Collins, R-Maine, the legislation aims to not only delay the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative by at least a year but proposes other changes aimed at making cross-

border travel less restrictive.

Lawmakers, like Coleman and Collins, from states along the northern border have been trying for months to stall or alter the plan to require more secure border-crossing identification documents, contending the rules will hurt trade and tourism.

A law adopted by Congress three years ago led to the creation of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative to tighten security on both the Canadian and Mexican borders, but many members are now fuming at the notion their constituents will need a \$97 passport or a not-yet-developed passcard, expected to cost around \$50. Children would be exempt.

Democratic Sen. Charles Schu-

mer has predicted the government won't be able to start in January, but Department of Homeland Security officials insist they will.

"We have a firm deadline and we're absolutely committed to moving forward with the implementation of western hemisphere travel requirements at our northern border," a Department of Homeland Security told a news service late last month.

The legislation requires sufficient staffing by the U.S. State Department to meet increasing passport demand, an analysis of a pilot program that explores enhanced driver's licenses as documentation for cross-border travel, and a full cost-benefit analysis of WHTI.

Millhauser

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

power, and risks poisoning your driver pool.

Soooooooooo, what to do?

If there were simple answers, there'd be no shortage, but there are some things you can try. You're probably doing many of them already.

Pay as much as you can afford. Easier said than done, but when they're driving your expensive bus, full of your customers, they are your partner. They can sell your company or not. Your future is literally in their hands.

Grow your own. It's easier to turn a good person into a driver, than turn a driver into a good person. Find qualified non-drivers and teach them to operate a coach — your way.

It's a great job for semi-retired folks. Younger applicants will have a chance to see the country, with lots of opportunities for advancement into management.

Little things you can do may be worth more to your people than they cost you. Look for them, in lieu of raising pay. Higher meal per diems, uniform allowances, permitting spouses on trips, use of your facilities for washing their cars. Little things.

Where possible, build in performance incentives, including safety, economy and reliability benchmarks that both acknowledge, and reward, superior performance.

Treat them fairly. Some trips are more fun than others, some tip better. Make sure the good ones are spread around evenly. Don't let a few drivers schmooze your dispatchers into giving them all the good work because you'll lose the others. If you are an owner that drives on occasion, don't take the best jobs.

Keep your buses presentable. Drivers feel better about themselves when they like and trust their equipment. (And, they get more tips). Address reported defects as

quickly as possible, and drivers will feel as if they're being taken seriously. Be honest with them when a repair must be deferred.

Years ago I drove for a guy who looked me in the eye and said: "This bus has problems but we really need it. Anyone can drive a good bus but I need my best guys on the bad ones." Manipulative? Heck yes. But I'd have done anything to live up to his expectations.

It's a different world today, but understanding the difficulty of the job, and doing your best to take care of good people will pay off with more and better drivers.

Publicly recognize superior performance. It's more fun (and generally more effective) to publicly compliment your folks, than to clobber them. With any luck your other employees will get an idea of what you're looking for.

It's a cliché but many of the best operators have public bulletin boards full of customer letters and commendations. Use them in advertisements and your drivers

Program targets aggressive drivers

WASHINGTON — Scores of law enforcement agencies in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Washington, D.C., are cracking down on aggressive driving again this summer.

The Smooth Operator program involves more than 300 law enforcement agencies from the three states and the District of Columbia.

They're conducting four "waves" of increased enforcement, targeting aggressive driving from June through September.

The Smooth Operator program

has been around for a decade and during that time more than 1.5 million citations have been issued to aggressive drivers. Last year, nearly 365,000 citations and warnings were issued.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates aggressive driving is a factor in one-third of all highway fatalities.

Among officials participating in the program kickoff earlier this month was John H. Hill, administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

will love it.

It's no secret but we all need to be reminded: the best people don't work just for money. They work for recognition, and a sense of worth. Satisfy that need, and your drivers will be happy and plentiful.

A trucker once told me he had switched to driving a coach because it was easier than driving a

truck and it loaded itself. He only lasted a year, and last I heard, was on a waiting list for a heart transplant. Guess the bus thing was more stressful than he thought.

Hope he made it.

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

Finding drivers

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

truck. He raced through intersections. I have a reputation of providing safe transportation. That's why I tell (recruits) when they approach an intersection with a green light, approach it as if it is yellow. You don't know what's coming."

Kraft recalls a shocking experience a San Francisco operator had: "I was complaining to him about the quality of drivers we're getting and he said one of his drivers took a coach out in the morning and damaged it, and took another one out in the afternoon and damaged it, too."

Operators are oftentimes willing to put up with poor drivers because there are no other options, he says. There was a time when retired professionals, including school principals, concert violinists and fire fighters, wanted something else to do.

"I can teach someone like that to be a good coach driver," Kraft says.

"I can't take someone who is not a responsible person and teach him to be a responsible person. This population today has other interests."

He suggests that coach operators who are friendly competitors locally and nationally get together and agree on reasonable expectations for new drivers.

"There has to be an ongoing effort on the part of the industry that there are certain characteristics of drivers below which we cannot go," Kraft says. "Even something

as critical as a pre-trip inspection, which is the foundation of a safe trip. Drivers tell me, 'I'm a driver, I'm not a mechanic. You're going to have to take care of that yourself.' If pilots took that same cavalier attitude the sky would be raining airplanes."

The regular-work issue

Pay is definitely a factor with the driver shortage. School districts and transit authorities, also starving for drivers, are able to pay enough and to assure they work enough hours.

"Coach operators can't do that," Kraft says. "Our busy times may vary."

We may come to a point where we put a driver on salary. If I do that, I want real live drivers who are committed to the notion that it benefits drivers tremendously to come in on days they're not driving and participate in the maintenance of their vehicles. They might learn something."

Kraft takes every applicant on the same road test under the same weather conditions.

"I'm not looking for a driver who is perfect," he says. "I'm looking for someone who can adapt to driving a vehicle for the first time. I want to see how he reacts to various situations."

Cruising through a neighborhood, Kraft watches to see if the driver checks left and right — and up, to avoid low-hanging tree branches. Then he has them stop and back around a corner.

"It's really a test designed to unnerve them," Kraft says. "There's

nothing more unnerving than a load of teenagers at night."

Not enough right stuff

Ralph Young, president of Young Transportation in Asheville, N.C., says his biggest challenge today is "drivers — finding, hiring and maintaining the type of people we look for."

Young doesn't place help-wanted ads in newspapers because "the undesirables come out of woodwork." He relies on word-of-mouth.

Godfrey Lebron, vice president and general manager of Paradise Travel in Hicksville, N.Y., says the education system is not churning out people the industry wants to employ.

When Lebron started out, a person could get a license to drive a bus at the age of 18. Now it's 21. "We had a whole generation of college students who drove buses while doing their undergraduate work," he says. "Young kids infused talent into the industry. But they're not filling those positions today. Hiring retirees for a few years — you can't build an industry on that."

Problems in attracting young drivers include no overtime pay, long hours and work on holidays and weekends. "It's not an attractive work schedule," Lebron observes.

Increasing the age for a commercial driver license to 21 from 18 more than a decade ago hurt recruitment efforts. "Now when kids reach 21 they're already working other jobs," he says.

Never too young

Lebron suggests having drivers do a show-and-tell in schools to attract prospects. "We need to start early," he says. "We can't wait until college. We've got to do a better job of recruiting, but there's no silver bullet."

Brian Scott, vice president of Escot Bus Lines in Largo, Fla., says it's tough to find good drivers in a good economy. Driver pay needs to increase, matched by an increase in rates, he says.

Scott also blames image, saying bus drivers don't have the same level of respect afforded employees of railroads and airlines.

"Often people we want to hire are disqualified because they don't have enough experience or have too many points on their license," Scott says. "Occasionally they can't pass the pre-employment drug screening."

"We're under so much scrutiny because we carry school kids. It's gotten to the point that any blemish on a driving record and the person can't be hired."

Scott cites the example of a Florida hunter who had killed an animal out of season, was convicted of a felony, and was prevented from driving a bus. A DUI conviction 20 years ago could be another obstacle, he says.

"It's gotten out of hand," he says. "I think the industry needs a mentoring program to capture youth. Insurance requirements put us at a disadvantage. We can't hire until they're 25 because of insurance costs. How many young people say, 'I can't wait to hit 25 so I

can drive a bus.' We really want 30-year-olds but by that time they're doing something else or they've probably failed at something else."

The insurance factor

Michelle Silvestro of National Interstate Insurance Co. in Richfield, Ohio, confirms that insurance plays a part in the recruitment of young drivers.

"I don't want to tell you who to hire, and legally I can't," she says. "You can hire Mickey Mouse. We look at the 25-to-65 age group. If you have a couple under or over that, we'll look at how you manage your driver pool as a whole and your experience."

Driving a bus is not marketed as a great job, Silvestro says. "It's seen as something people do because they can't do something else. The way to change that is through education. Individuals should go to trade schools and talk about driving as a profession. Guidance counselors know who's going to college. Kids going to college aren't going to drive a bus. You have to appeal to those who are potential drivers — in trade schools and high schools."

A key to attracting and retaining drivers revolves around the pay and benefits offered. "You have to be competitive," Silvestro says.

She also emphasizes the importance of image, and says, "With any worker, in any profession, mutual respect creates a situation where drivers want to work for you. The culture of operators is key. If the owners or drivers have a laissez faire attitude, you just get a driver, but you never get them to stay."

Calendar

JUNE 2007

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.

Roadcheck rounds-up Russian

GREENWOOD, Neb. — Roadcheck 2007, the annual safety inspection blitz organized by the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, came and went earlier this month and about the only headline stemming from the event concerned a truck driver stopped in Nebraska.

The trucker was from Russia and couldn't speak a word of English, but that hadn't stopped him from tooling down Interstate 80 in a big rig.

This year's Roadcheck was

June 5-7, and motorcoaches were a major focus. Overall results are expected later this month or early next month.

Meanwhile, at an inspection point on I-80 near Greenwood, Neb., officers pulled over a trucker whose rig and paperwork passed inspection — but who couldn't speak English.

A reporter for an Omaha television station, who was on the scene, said that after inspectors explained they were placing the man out of service for not being able to speak

Lancer launches platinum program for IMG members

LONG BEACH, N.Y. — Lancer Insurance Company has introduced a special benefit program for members of the International Motor Coach Group, including providing IMG with a \$40,000 annual grant to support its safety initiatives, including its annual Safety & Maintenance Forum.

The Lancer program provides

exclusive benefits to IMG members over and above services the insurer provides IMG policyholders. The benefits are:

- Use of DriveCam equipment as part of Lancer's DriveCam Pilot Program.
- Two annual visits by their Lancer claims executive to review all open claims.
- Quarterly visits by their

Illinois expands camera vans

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — Illinois is cracking down on speeders in construction zones again this summer.

For the second consecutive year, the state is using special camera vans to ticket speeders in construction areas.

Last year, Illinois State Police

used three camera-equipped vans to ticket 4,000 vehicles and their drivers. At \$375 per ticket, the aggressive ticketing potentially raised \$1.5 million for the state.

This year, there are four vans. Three of the units are working in the Chicago area, while the fourth is heading further south.

English, he got back in the cab and started driving slowly away. Inspectors had to flag him down again and have him park the truck.

Federal regulations require

CDL holders to be able to speak and read English reasonably well, but at the same time, 17 states and the District of Columbia offer CDL tests in foreign languages.



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Museum 'Spring Fling' is rated a hit, attendance soars



The 'Fling's' bus collectible marketplace was very popular.

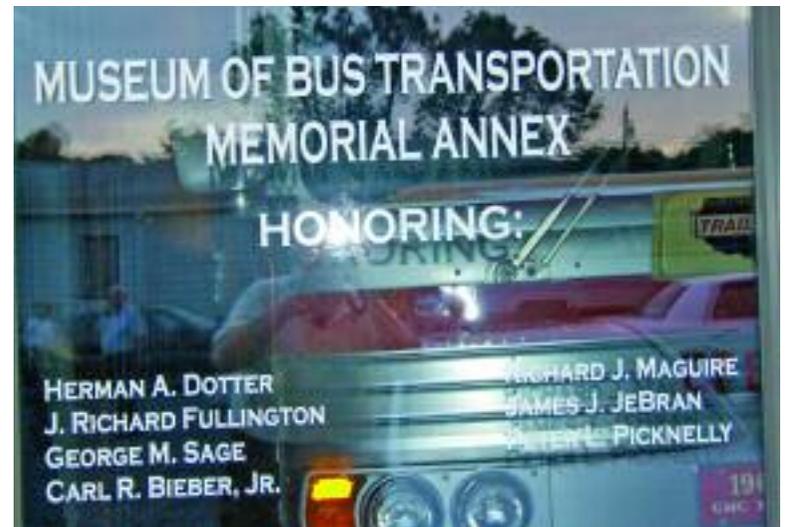
HERSHEY, Pa. — The Museum of Bus Transportation's 2007 Spring Fling has been deemed an outstanding success.

More than 300 people from across North America came to Hershey early this month to see the more than 30 antique and unusual school, transit and intercity buses on display, and to shop for bus memorabilia from 18 vendors on hand for the event.

Attendance at the Fling more than doubled that of last year.

The '07 event was marked by three special circumstances: the first public viewing of the museum's new Memorial Annex; the dedication of the building, and the opening of discussions about converting the Fling into a full-blown industry event.

Visitors parked their cars at the museum and were shuttled the mile and a quarter to the Memorial Annex — courtesy of Wolf's Bus



Lines of York Springs, Pa.

The new facility is a pole barn-type building with a cement floor that's large enough to house 14 of the museum's buses while they're not on display. The building also includes an office for the museum.

The 3 1/2-acre lot adjoining the building can accommodate addi-

tional buses in outdoor parking. For the Fling, all the buses were parked outside and the building was used by the museum staff to serve lunch to the visitors and as floor space for the vendors.

During an afternoon ceremony, the Memorial Annex was dedicated to honored founders and benefactors of the Museum: Richard Mcguire, Herman Dotter, Richard Fullington, George Sage, Carl Bieber, James Jebran and Peter Picknelly.

Representatives from ABC Companies, Motor Coach Industries, Prevost Car, Lancer Insurance and the Michaud bus sales organization visited the site to contemplate their involvement with Flings in coming years.

According to Beard, the museum board is considering expanding the event in a number of directions. Several ideas are under consideration, including increasing the Fling to a two-day event; adding such activities as a formal dinner and bus tours, and providing industry suppliers a display area.

Particular attention also is being given to the idea of expanding the aspects of the event that interest collectors.

Beard said the Fling has become the "only game in town" for anyone seeking to buy or sell bus models, toys, photos, magazines, fare boxes, badges, depot signs, destination signs and other collectibles.

Because Hershey is an established tourist attraction with plenty for visitors to see and do, and because the Spring Fling is organized and run by volunteers, Beard feels that with greater involvement and sponsorship from the bus industry an expanded event may be feasible in years to come.

For pictures of the event, go to www.buseum.org. Questions or comments can be directed by e-mail to: thebuseum@yahoo.com.

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Canadian coach association promotes idling programs

TORONTO — Motor Coach Canada has come up with a proactive plan for helping communities and tourism venues develop programs that reduce unnecessary idling by tour coaches.

The idea for the initiative grew out of the successful Spare the Air Emissions Reduction Project implemented by the Niagara Parks Commission early in this decade.

Based on that success, Motor Coach Canada approached Natural Resources Canada's FleetSmart and Urban & Environmental Management Inc., with the idea of developing a toolkit that communities and tourism venues across Canada could use to implement anti-idling programs.

To develop its idea, Motor Coach Canada involved more than 100 stakeholders from the tourism sector, motorcoach and trucking companies, advocacy groups and border crossings.

As a result of the effort, the association came up with the "Idle-Free Destination Toolkit," which is now available to communities and

other groups.

Brian Crow, president of Motor Coach Canada, said the association has long favored voluntary measures on the part of coach operators and drivers over laws, enforcement and fines as a way to reduce unnecessary idling.

"This toolkit will augment voluntary efforts already in place across the industry to minimize the environmental impact of motorcoach travel and promote environmental stewardship," said Dave Carroll, director of safety and maintenance for Motor Coach Canada.

Crow said the toolkit's central document is a "step-by-step guide that provides guidance on the requirements for implementing a successful idling reduction program."

The guide is complemented by communication tools, such as sample promotional material, as well as information on scheduling and budgeting. The kit also contains background information about other idling reduction programs,

including municipalities with guides developed to inform motorcoach drivers about their idling policies, attractions and designated motorcoach parking.

In addition, there are sections in the toolkit that discuss idling-reduction technologies, education programs for fuel-efficient driving, sample idling policies and informa-

tion about the impacts of idling.

The toolkit is available at no charge by contacting Bagshaw by phone (613) 947-0236, or e-mail dbagshaw@nrcan.gc.ca.

N.Y. is popular destination for Ontario coach operators

TORONTO — New York is the No. 1 destination among tour operator members of the Ontario Motor Coach Association.

In a survey, half of the association's members said they send tours to New York. Toronto was No. 2 at 29 percent; Quebec No. 3 at 25 percent, followed by Ottawa at 20 percent, Branson at 18 percent, Pennsylvania at 16 percent, and Arizona at 9 percent.

OMCA Chairman Dave Willis said it was significant that New York was nearly twice as popular as the next highest-ranked destination,

especially considering the very diverse tour operator membership of the association.

The survey was conducted by phone. Tour operators were asked an open-ended question to identify their most-popular destinations. Consequently city names were mixed with state/provincial names.

Operators could list more than one destination as being popular.

The OMCA members also were asked whether their business was up, down or the same, with operators reporting increased business from previous years.

Canadian dollar strengthens

OTTAWA, Canada — The value of the Canadian dollar has been rising during most of the first half of this year, exceeding its 30-year high.

The loonie has risen to 94 cents U.S., thanks largely to a stronger-than-expected Canadian economy and economic slowing in the U.S.

A year ago, the loonie hit 91 cents, its high point since the

1970s, before slipping back during the winter.

A rising loonie impacts various sectors of the Canadian economy differently. It doesn't bode particularly well for travelers visiting Canada or for manufacturers that export products to the U.S. and bill in American dollars. It does make imports more attractive in Canada.

Canadian coach directory available

TORONTO — Motor Coach Canada has released the 2007 Directory of Motor Coach and Tour Operators in Canada.

This directory is designed to facilitate travel to and within Canada and to promote the motor-

coach and receptive services of member of Motor Coach Canada. It is directed to international inbound markets.

For more information or to obtain a copy of the directory, e-mail info@motorcoachcanada.com.

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