

# Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

## Safety chief tries curbside buses

### Enjoys safe, comfortable trip to NYC

WASHINGTON — The federal government's chief bus safety administrator spent 10 hours riding curbside intercity motorcoaches between Washington and New York late last month, pronouncing the experience safe and comfortable.

John Hill, administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, hopped on a BoltBus at the corner of 11th and G streets Northwest, roughly a mile and a quarter from his office in Washington, and traveled five hours to New York City for a conference.

BoltBus is the curbside operation set up by Greyhound Lines and Peter Pan Bus Lines that began operating in the northeastern U.S. early this spring. Bolt is designed to meet the competition posed by the so-called Chinatown bus operators that have mushroomed during the past five years.

A few hours later, Hill boarded an as yet unidentified Chinatown bus for the return trip to Washington.

In writing about his experience on the Internet, Hill gave little indication as to what prompted him to use the cut-rate bus lines, other than to say he decided he wanted



Photo by Shashunga Clayton, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration  
FMCSA Administrator John Hill pauses before boarding BoltBus for New York.

“to personally experience a relative newcomer to the transportation industry: ‘curbside’ bus carriers.”

Hill says he bought his tickets online and quickly noted the distinctions between curbside opera-

tors and traditional intercity bus operators — no terminals or ticket offices and schedules posted online.

“As I learned when purchasing

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 ▶

## Public transit agencies irritated by charter rule try end runs, loopholes

WASHINGTON D.C. — Public transit agencies across the U.S. apparently aren't finished with their efforts to retain some of the lucrative charter work they were doing before the Federal Transit Administration clipped their wings with new federal charter service regulations.

After inundating the FTA with several hundred letters of complaint prior to the new rule taking effect April 30, the transit operators now are taking other routes and turning to other sources to circumvent the rule or find loopholes in it.

Some are filing requests with the FTA for special exemptions that would allow them to continue providing shuttle bus service to major sports events or community festivals. Others are asking for favorable advisory opinions from federal regulators, declaring that some of their special bus services are not really charters under the new rules.

Still others are pushing news articles in local newspapers that sometimes imply the FTA and private motorcoach carriers are to blame for transit agencies not being able to provide their usual shuttle service to popular events.

And, a few are calling on their

congressional representatives for help in possibly making changes to the rule.

The FTA, meanwhile, said it has not received any formal complaints about the rule other than the filings for exemptions and advisory opinions, according to spokesman Paul Griffo.

Updating of the 30-year-old federal charter services regulation, which was mandated by Congress, came after a year-long rulemaking procedure that included monthly meetings between FTA lawyers and representatives of public transit agencies and private bus companies.

Private operators have complained for years that the existing rules were not working and were being ignored by federally funded transit agencies that were taking charter jobs away from them by undercutting their prices.

So far, the FTA has issued a number of exemptions to transit agencies that allowed them to continue running shuttles to highly attended major events, including the Indianapolis 500 and professional baseball games in Seattle.

In addition, it has fielded more

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10 ▶

## 2010 engine choices may unsettle coach industry

In less than two years, when bus builders supplying motorcoaches to the North American market begin introducing their 2010 models, there could be major differences among the competing brands unlike anything operators have seen before.

That's because the coach manufacturers will be using two completely different engine technologies to power their new models.

And there are predictions the best technology for meeting the 2010 federal emission standards could have a dramatic long-term impact on the over-the-road commercial vehicle industry.

Unlike 2004 and 2007, 2010 will mark the first time engine manufacturers and their coach and trucking-building customers will be offering two distinctly different

diesel engine emissions-reduction technologies.

Fleets will have to choose which of the technologies is best for them, and that has the potential to trigger shifts in market shares among the OEMs. If coach buyers don't feel comfortable they may move their purchases to another brand.

In recent months, executives

from the major diesel engine suppliers have vigorously defended their companies' choice of technology, either selective catalytic reduction, or exhaust gas recirculation. In some cases, there has been pointed criticism of one technology over the other.

The battle over diesel engine emissions technology was instigated by the U.S. Environmental

Protection Agency, which set standards for 2010 engines that reduce nitrogen oxide emissions to practically zero.

To cut NOx, selective catalytic reduction mixes urea into the engine exhaust, where it becomes a catalyst in a filter that converts NOx into nitrogen and water.

Exhaust gas recirculation, on

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14 ▶



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# Court rules against industry in D.C. permit-fee suit

WASHINGTON — A controversial District of Columbia Department of Motor Vehicles' regulation that requires charter buses visiting the nation's capital to have trip permits has been upheld by the D.C. Superior Court.

Judge Jeannette Clark ruled the disputed regulation — put in place a year ago by the D. C. City Council and which also affects trucks and other commercial vehicles — does not violate federal interstate commerce laws or vehicle registration rules.

The decision allows the D.C. DMV to continue to require charter operators registered outside of the district to purchase permits for each coach they send into Washington. The permits cost \$50 each and are good for six days.

The requirement was challenged in court by three major motorcoach industry trade organizations, the United Motorcoach, American Bus and National Tour associations, which said permit requirement not only was illegal, but was a "money grab" by the dis-

trict government.

As many as 1,000 charter buses visit the nation's capital every day, making the fee an easy and hefty new source of revenue for the district and a major expense for charter bus operators and their customers, the three associations maintained.

Rick Schweitzer, general counsel for the ABA who argued the court case for the industry, said the associations are considering appealing the decision, which he described as disappointing and wrong.

The coalition has until June 27 to file such an action that would take the case to the D.C. Court of Appeals.

UMA Vice President Ken Presley said he, too, was disappointed by the decision and that an appeal certainly is an option. "The industry has had its day in court, at least our first day," he said.

The industry argued that the permit requirement restricted interstate commerce, conflicted with the requirements of the International Registration Plan, and was unconstitutional because it applied only

to out-of-state carries entering the district.

"We made our case at the oral arguments, but the judge already had her mind made up," said Schweitzer, noting the judge delivered an oral ruling from the bench rather than issuing a more common written one.

He maintained that, in addition to Clark's decision being incorrect, she also erred in a key conclusion involving the interstate commerce issue.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 ▶

# Feds award \$11 million in coach security grants

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has awarded \$11.17 million to 49 motorcoach companies under the fiscal 2008 Intercity Bus Security Grant Program.

The amount of grant money awarded this year was down slightly from last year, when \$11.64 million was awarded to 39 companies, but up 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 in fiscal '05 resulted from tougher restrictions on who could apply.

The '08 grants mark the sixth consecutive year the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has awarded money to private bus operators to make security improvements.

A total of \$71.7 million in taxpayer dollars have flowed from the federal treasury to private operators during the past six years. However, just over 40 percent of that money has gone to one company — Greyhound Lines, which has received a total of \$29 million. Greyhound's fiscal '08 grant was for \$3.46 million, up slightly from last year's \$3.28 million.

Academy Express of Hoboken, N.J. and Peter Pan Lines of Springfield, Mass., have each received nearly \$3 million during the past six years, with Academy awarded \$836,953 this year, and Peter Pan getting \$674,865.

As it has virtually every year, the Department of Homeland Security modified the program again for '08. This year, applicants were required to come up with a 25 percent match to secure a grant. That means the operators getting grants this year must pony up a total of \$2.79 million.

Operators applying this year also were required to have both a company security plan and a vulnerability assessment that had to be submitted to the Department of Homeland Security.

The Intercity Bus Security Grant Program has always been weighted in favor of the industry's largest coach operators but less so than in the past.

This year, 55 percent of the money is going to operators having 250 or more over-the-road buses, versus 70 percent last year.

Because the security grant program has two "tiers" — one for the largest operators and the other for

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12 ▶

# UMA unveils Website for '09 Expo

ORLANDO, Fla. — The United Motorcoach Association has launched a Website for UMA Motorcoach Expo 2009. Go to [www.motorcoachexpo.com](http://www.motorcoachexpo.com).

Next year's Expo will be Jan. 21-25 in Orlando, making Expo roughly 220 days away.

Following the recording breaking January Expo in San Francisco, next year's event in Orlando, one of America's favorite convention and vacation cities, is expected to be equally exciting and dynamic.

The Expo '09 Website is a one-stop location for information about

the show. Users will find:

- Registration information for both attendees and exhibitors
- Up-to-date exhibitor list and floorplan
- Answers to frequently asked questions
- Other timely information

Registration for UMA Expo '09 is now open and hotels are taking reservations.

As UMA Meetings and Operators Director Amy Stalknecht says: "It's never too early to make plans to attend the premier motorcoach and travel industry event."

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# THE DOCKET

## Warning issued for antismoking drug 'Chantix'

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration says drivers of commercial motor vehicles should not use the antismoking drug Chantix because of potential side effects.

The FMCSA also has advised medical examiners not to qualify anyone using Chantix.

The announcements from the FMCSA came one day after the Federal Aviation Administration banned use of the drug by airplane pilots and air traffic controllers.

The agencies made their decisions in response to a study by the Institute for Safe Medication Practices claiming Chantix was linked to seizures, dizziness, heart rhythm problems, diabetes and more than 100 accidents.

According to the report, the drug was associated with 988 serious incidents in the last quarter of 2007.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration already has updated warnings on Chantix's label to reflect adverse effects, including depression and suicidal thoughts. The report, however, urges even stronger warnings.

A FDA spokeswoman said the agency was focusing on likely links between Chantix and neuropsychiatric side effects.

Following its introduction two years ago, Chantix developed a reputation as a wonder drug for people wanting to stop smoking. But in recent months the drug has come under attack by drug-safety groups due to its side effects.

Researchers say hundreds of patients reported various traffic mishaps while they were using the drug. There have been reports of loss of consciousness, mental confusion, muscle spasms, vision loss, and severe skin reactions.

More than 3.5 million Americans have used Chantix, which costs roughly \$130 a month.

## A positive drug test: Now what do you do?

By Eric Arnold

From a safety and regulatory standpoint, a driver who tests positive for drugs is not something to be taken lightly.

USDOT takes its drug rules very seriously, and will fine a company several thousands of dollars if every 'i' is not dotted and 't' crossed. While they may take it a little too far, from a safety standpoint you want to make sure your employees are not using. If they are, it's just a matter of time before they hurt themselves, or worse, somebody else.

There are five types of USDOT drug tests: pre-employment, random, post-accident, reasonable suspicion, and return-to-duty.

The most common test a driver fails is the pre-employment test. You may think, "why on earth would a driver apply for a job if he's on drugs, and he knows he's going to be drug tested?"

A better question is: "Why wouldn't he?" After all, it costs him nothing. It may have been two weeks since he smoked his last

joint, so he thinks he might pass. If he fails, oh well, on to the next job.

This type of positive test is easy to handle, simply do not hire the driver. This is why you never, ever, put a new driver behind the wheel until you get his or her pre-employment drug test results back.

The more complicated scenario is when a driver fails a random test. If a driver flunks a random test, the medical review officer will notify you, probably with a phone call a week or so after the test was taken.

A phone call is not guaranteed, however. Sometimes they send the results via fax or e-mail. Once you receive the results, you are responsible for immediately removing that driver from all "safety-sensitive" functions.

The definition of safety-sensitive functions includes driving a commercial vehicle, fixing a commercial vehicle, loading a vehicle, or even riding in one.

USDOT expects you to act immediately. When they are conducting their audits they will find out if you had any positive tests,

determine the time you were notified, and then search your time records, dispatch sheets and logbooks to determine how long a driver drove after you were notified. If it is more than an hour or two, they will likely nail you for using a positive driver.

You must use your cell phone and get the driver in question out of the vehicle immediately. You need to have that driver park his vehicle and get another driver to take over.

Do not let the positive driver ride in the bus.

Under no circumstances ignore a positive test result. I have seen this happen time and time again — a driver fails a test and the carrier just keeps on dispatching him. Get a positive driver out of the vehicle.

Now that you have removed a positive driver from duty, what do you?

The simple answer is, fire him, but things are not always that simple.

Perhaps he's a long-time, loyal employee, and you want to give him a second chance. When mak-

ing the decision on whether or not to keep a positive driver, some questions which should influence your decision are: What type of drug did he test positive? Was he using it on the job or while off-duty? Was it occasional or regular usage? How valuable is this employee?

Should you determine you want to keep the driver, he or she must go through the "substance abuse professional" process to re-qualify as a legal CDL driver. He or she must complete the substance abuse professional process exactly and completely, otherwise that individual will still be viewed as a positive driver by USDOT.

When this rare circumstance does happen, if you don't remember exactly what to do, call an expert for help.

*Eric Arnold is a former enforcement agent with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, and an expert on USDOT compliance for small businesses. He heads Arnold Safety Consulting in Birdsboro, Pa. Contact him at [eric@arnoldsafety.com](mailto:eric@arnoldsafety.com).*

## GAO says FMCSA needs more drug testing authority

WASHINGTON — Shortcomings in the oversight of drug testing of commercial drivers is allowing some drivers to work without submitting urine samples for testing, says a new federal report.

The report from the Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress, said the federal agency responsible for monitoring the safety of commercial drivers, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, lacks the resources for oversight and enforcement.

The GAO recommends that the U.S. Secretary of Transportation create a national database of drug testing information and move quickly to improve safety audits.

The GAO also said Congress should pass legislation to ban products that individuals can use to

substitute or alter urine samples, require states to suspend commercial driver licenses for individuals who decline to take or fail a drug test, and give the FMCSA more authority over the drug testing process.

Results of the investigation were announced last month by Rep. Jim Oberstar, D-Minn., chairman of the House Transportation Committee, who ordered it in response to an investigation by a Minnesota television that aired in March 2007.

The GAO report said that "although (the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration) and its state partners review thousands of carriers each year, these reviews touch about 2 percent of the industry."

At 10 of 24 urine collection sites, the report said, undercover investigators were not asked to

empty their pockets, as sites should require, before proving a urine sample.

The report said many factors contribute to the challenges of detecting drivers who are using illegal drugs and keeping them off the road until they complete the required return-to-duty treatment process.

The study also noted that because FMCSA safety audits touch only about 2 percent of all truck and bus companies, carriers have limited incentives to follow the drug testing regulations.

Additionally, drivers have learned that subverting the urine drug tests is easy, either because collection sites are not following protocols or because of the ready availability of products that adulterate or substitute for urine specimens.

For example, GAO investiga-

tors, posing as commercial truck drivers needing drug tests, found that employees at 10 of 24 collection sites tested did not ask the investigator to empty his pants pockets, as they are required to do, to ensure he was not carrying adulterants or substitutes.

GAO's analysis identified the following options as having the greatest potential for addressing the issue:

- Increasing the number of drivers tested and strengthening the enforcement of safety audits for new carriers. USDOT has begun doing this.
- Reducing opportunities to subvert testing and giving FMCSA additional authority to levy fines when collection sites do not follow federal protocols.
- Develop a national database of drug testing information.

## Management of state governments is graded on performance: B- is average

WASHINGTON — Utah, Virginia and Washington were the best performing and managed states in the latest assessment by the Pew Center on the States.

The 2008 edition of Pew's periodic evaluation examined how

state governments dealt with a variety of issues and how much it cost them. It then gave the states a grade based on their performance.

In the latest study, the national average was a B-, awarded to 18 states.

Thirteen states were above average, while 19 were below average.

The highest scores went to Utah, Virginia and Washington, all with A-; New Hampshire was alone at the bottom with a D+.

In 2005, the last time Pew issued its assessment, the highest grade, an A, went to Delaware, Utah and Virginia, and the lowest, C-, went to Alabama and California.

Better management helped the

top three states to their position this year.

To examine the full report, go to [www.pewcenteronthestates.org](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org). Look for the document *Grading the States 2008: Pew's 50-State Report Card Evaluates States*.

## Rhode Island puts limits on two bridges

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — The Rhode Island Department of Transportation has issued weight restrictions for two bridges on major routes — the Pawtucket River Bridge on Interstate 95 and the Sakonnet River Bridge on State Route 24 — that could impact motorcoach operators.

The restriction on the Pawtucket River Bridge on I-95, between exits 27 and 28, is 18 tons. Fines are steep for violations — \$3,000 for the first violation and \$5,000 for subsequent violations.

To re-route: If traveling northbound through Rhode Island and

not stopping north of Warwick, take I-295 North which bypasses Providence and Pawtucket. It rejoins I-95 in Attleboro, Mass.

If destinations are further north, simply continue on I-95; if your destination is the cape, other points east or west, I-95 intersects with I-495 at Exit 6 on I-95 near Mansfield.

For southbound, just reverse.

Another option for points east is to continue on I-95 North through Warwick and into Providence and taking I-195 East to Fall River, New Bedford and the cape. However, there is construction on

that road and traffic can be intense.

If visiting Providence or Pawtucket and you do not wish to back-track south to I-295, visit the following Web page for routing through Pawtucket streets: <http://www.dot.ri.gov/traffic/bridge550.html>.

The weight restriction on the Sakonnet River Bridge, which connects Tiverton and Portsmouth (en route to and from Newport), is 22 tons.

Empty coaches may use the bridge, but full buses must use alternate routes. Fines have not

been announced for Sakonnet Bridge but the best guess is they will be the same.

To re-route, use the Mount Hope Bridge which connects Bristol and Portsmouth, or use Routes 95, 4, 1 and 138.

For example: A coach coming from the cape and heading to Newport can either take I-195 west, then 136 south (through Swansea, Warren and Bristol) go over the Mount Hope Bridge and connect with either 138 or 114 to continue to Newport.

Or, a coach can follow I-195 west to Providence, then take I-95 south to Route 4 south, which connects with Route 1 south, then follow Route 138 east over the Jamestown and Newport bridges. More information and a map may be found at: <http://www.dot.ri.gov/traffic/Sakonnetdetour.html>.

The Rhode Island DOT Website is at: <http://www.dot.ri.gov/>.

The bridges are being replaced for safety reasons.

The bridge information was provided to the motorcoach industry by the tourism division of the

## UCRA policing begins on July 1

INDIANAPOLIS — States participating in the Unified Carrier Registration System, which replaced the old Single State Registration System, have changed this year's enforcement date to July 1.

Earlier this year, when registration under the system began for 2008, most state members of the plan agreed to begin enforcing the Unified Carrier Registration Act requirements on June 1. (See April 1 issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Now, however, the states have agreed to delay the enforcement date until July 1, to accommodate the registration of carriers and other entities that may have received their UCRA registration notices late.

However, operators should be careful. Some states may begin enforcement against their own carriers earlier than July.

Rhode Island Economic Development Corp.

## I-35W bridge may open sooner than expected

MINNEAPOLIS — The contractor building the bridge that will replace the Interstate 35W bridge that collapsed into the Mississippi River last year says it is more than three months ahead of schedule for completing the project.

Late last month, the first pair of pre-cast concrete main span segments were placed on the St. Anthony Falls Bridge across the river in Minneapolis.

The new bridge will be wider than its predecessor, containing two more traffic lanes, plus shoulders on the right and left sides.

The projected completion date is Dec. 24, but the contractor, Flatiron Construction Corp., puts completion at closer to Sept. 15, 100 days early.

Flatiron has a strong incentive to finish early — it will be paid \$200,000 for each day ahead of

schedule the bridge is completed.

The Minnesota DOT is not changing Dec. 24 as the estimated date of completion — yet.

However, an early opening would please MnDOT because it's estimated that the cost of doing without the bridge is nearly \$400,000 a day.

Photos tracking the progress on the construction are available at [www.dot.state.mn.us](http://www.dot.state.mn.us).



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## Tire makers sign truck stop deals

Two major manufacturers and marketers of tires for motorcoaches — Michelin and Bridgestone Firestone — have made deals with large truck stop operators to distribute their tires.

Michelin Americas Truck Tires and Love's Travel Stops signed an agreement under which Love's will feature Michelin bus and truck tires and related products.

Earlier, Bridgestone Firestone North American Tire signed a seven-year agreement with TravelCenters of America to sell Bridgestone and Firestone commercial tires at TravelCenter outlets and Petro Stopping Centers.

Love's also announced that it's expanding services offered at many locations to include tire and emergency road service.

Guy Pekle, Michelin's vice president of replacement sales, said Love's commitment to providing out-

standing service to operators of commercial vehicles mirrors that of Michelin, which makes the agreement beneficial to carriers from coast to coast.

"Before the end of 2009, we will have enabled 100 locations to carry the new Love's Tire Care banner and offer emergency road service along their key access corridors, as well as tire sales and services," said Kevin McCarthy, Love's divisional manager of tire sales and services. Love's has more than 200 locations.

Under the Bridgestone Firestone-TravelCenters of America deal, Bridgestone becomes the exclusive commercial tire offered by both TravelCenters of America and Petro:Lube vehicle maintenance and centers.

The combined TravelCenters of America and Petro:Lube replacement tire network features more than 230 locations and 400 road service vehicles.

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In 2007, MTR Western was listed as the 166th fastest growing privately held company in America by Inc. Magazine (September, 2007). In addition, MTR Western was recently ranked as the 17th largest motorcoach company in North America by Metro Magazine (January, 2008). With locations in Calgary, Vancouver BC, Seattle, Portland, Eugene, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, and Los Angeles, our financial challenges cross state and international borders. We have an incredible corporate culture, we enjoy our work, and we live out of swanky corporate offices located in the heart of downtown Seattle.

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## D.C. permit

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

"She erroneously noted that the fees only apply to intrastate commerce and not interstate commerce, and that a carrier could operate through the district without being subject to the fees," he said. "That's just wrong."

A key industry argument involving the IRP apparently drew little attention from the judge.

Under an alternative written into the trip permit regulations, operators do not have to have a permit on their buses if they purchase apportioned tags from their home state each year and pay the district a fee based on the number of visits each coach makes to Washington.

Had the judge ruled the permit fee was unconstitutional, as suggested by the industry, then the only option left to operators would be to buy the apportioned registration tags. However, the IRP provides that charter buses are not apportionable vehicles and the district may not require an out-of-state carrier to apportion its registration.

Schweitzer said charter carriers may apportion registration at their option under the IRP, but the district's law would have become essentially mandatory had the permit fee been found to be illegal.

The trade organizations and several motorcoach operators jumped on the permit requirement when word of it became public last summer, some time after it was adopted by the D.C. City Council. The measure was included in a package of changes the council routinely made to DMV rules and regulations and received virtually no publicity when it was adopted.

Before the law took effect in August, motorcoach industry rep-

resentatives met with DMV officials and managed to convince them to make some positive fixes to it. However, they were unable to get them to try to get the council to rescind it.

Among the changes the DMV made at the urging of the industry were making the permits available for purchase online and allowing operators to buy them in bulk, rather than individually for each coach in their fleet. They also agreed to let operators obtain a free permit for a replacement bus if one with a permit broke down during a charter trip and had to be replaced by a bus that did not have a permit.

Under the law, operators can be fined up to \$500 if they do not have a permit on a bus traveling in the district and up to \$1,000 if they misuse a permit, including transferring it to a different coach.

Meantime, Presley urged operators that do not have apportioned plates to continue to purchase the trip permits for coaches that are sent to the district.

In addition, he encouraged operators that currently utilize base-state tags to become familiar with IRP rules and apportionable tags. "If anything positive has come out of the D.C. trip issue, it's that many operators have discovered that apportioned tags represent a savings for them," he noted. "It varies with base states and states traveled."

Still, he expressed concern that other states (D.C. is considered a state under IRP rules) may use the ruling and attempt to collect trip fees from operators as well. "State budgets are strained right now and they seem to be looking under every rock for every possible tax dollar," he noted.

## Mr. Hill's bus ride

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

my tickets, low costs are the big draw (of the curbside operators). Curbside carriers typically offer incentives to buy tickets early," Hill said.

"For example, some curbside bus companies offer seats for \$1 to the first purchasers. From there, the price increases as fewer seats become available. Buying a seat at the last minute, however, will still only cost about \$35 for a one-way trip to New York City. In fact, I paid more for a taxi to take me 33 blocks in Manhattan than I did for the cost of the five-hour trip from Washington," Hill noted.

After his trip, Hill said both halves of the journey "were comfortable and affordable. Most importantly, however, they both oper-

ated in a safe manner, were familiar with our safety regime, and both drivers appeared quite capable.

"And, for those of you who are wondering, I did not reveal my identity during either trip," Hill asserted.

"As the administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration — the federal agency that regulates the safety of interstate trucks and buses — I've always maintained that interstate passenger carriers have long been and continue to be among the safest mode of transportation in the United States, something that was demonstrated to me yet again last week. Our agency is committed to rigorous oversight of the bus industry."

Hill did not indicate whether he would become a regular inter-city bus traveler.

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# UMA wants training rule halted till CDL standards set

WASHINGTON — The United Motorcoach Association has roundly criticized a proposed federal rule establishing training requirements for new-entrant bus and truck operators, saying the rule would be at cross purposes with the government's goal of increasing highway safety.

In rejecting the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's proposed rulemaking, titled "Minimum Training Requirements for Entry-Level Commercial Motor Vehicle Operators," UMA also said the proposal would compound the national driver shortage that plagues the motorcoach industry.

Ken Presley, author of the comments and UMA's vice president for industry relations, argues that FMCSA sought no counsel from the passenger transportation industry in drafting the rule and as a result the proposal is barely relevant to the training needs of future bus drivers.

According to UMA, FMCSA persists in a "continued inclination to combine passenger transportation operations with long-haul trucking issues and solutions and disregards the enormous disparities in operations and responsibilities."

The rule draws from the Professional Truck Driving Institute and affiliated programs and uses the Model Truck Driver Training Curriculum as a sample training format while ignoring the Model Motorcoach Driver Training Curriculum entirely.

As a result, says Presley, critical "passenger transportation issues such as compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, lift and tie-down operations, bus and motorcoach fires and evacuation procedures" are not included

in the training requirements.

The proposed rule also ignores the reality of bus driver training as it exists in the United States today.

The FMCSA could identify 130 truck driver training schools, but the agency could not identify even one independent facility for bus and motorcoach drivers. Yet, somehow in the next three years, bus driver schools are expected to rise up fully accredited and ready to take over the training that has been the sole responsibility of motorcoach operators for decades.

In addition, the rulemaking does not include guidelines on the one outside source of bus driver education currently available — the online coursework provided by the accredited Bus and Motorcoach Academy administered by the College of Southern Maryland.

UMA contends that many of the current bus driver trainers, which are owners or employees of motorcoach companies, will be unwilling to bear the expense of

*'The proposed rule ignores the reality of bus driver training as it exists in the U.S. today.'*

becoming accredited, especially since the 58 hours of classroom training and 32 hours of behind-the-wheel training stipulated by the rule may fall short of the standard that they have established for their own purposes.

Motorcoach operators train drivers to meet their own business needs. This education can be quite specific to the job at hand. A statewide certification would mean a more generic curriculum, one less likely to suit the needs of the motorcoach company providing the training, Presley notes.

## N.H. bill will expose CDL holders' violations

CONCORD, N.H. — Both houses of the New Hampshire legislature have approved a bill that removes the discretion of the courts to place on file, or otherwise mask, convictions incurred by commercial driver license holders in New Hampshire or in other states.

Deferred imposition of sentence and diversion programs also are included in the prohibition.

The measure — HB1343 — exempts parking tickets, however. The law goes into effect Jan. 1 if, as expected, it is signed by the governor.

Incentive for New Hampshire to adopt the rule is tied to federal

funding. Failure to pass the bill would have resulted in the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration withholding \$4.9 million from the state in fiscal 2008 and \$9.7 million each year thereafter until the provision was implemented.

Meanwhile, a bill has died in the New Hampshire Senate that would have made it clear that aspiring truck and bus drivers must have a firm grasp of English before they can obtain a license to drive.

Federal rules require people who take tests for a commercial driver's licenses to be able to read and speak English well enough to

The motorcoach operators currently training drivers may be equally reluctant to bear the liability of certifying bus drivers for the state. The FMCSA has not taken this liability into account, says Presley.

A motorcoach company would take on a large risk by certifying bus drivers trained at its facility, since such certification would be required prior to the state's granting a CDL. The liability would remain throughout the driver's career, which could be much longer than the term of the driver's employment at a particular company. This kind of certification should fall, instead, under the authority of the state, Presley contends.

And, there is the tricky situation of intrastate bus drivers (school bus and transit drivers, for example), exempted from the proposed rule and yet able to attain a CDL despite the required entry-level training.

"The United Motorcoach Asso-

ciation concludes this likely creates an unintended path for CDL holders to progress to interstate driving, thus creating a significant number of drivers who may not have received adequate or required training."

### Putting the cart before the coach

While UMA supports the FMCSA's overarching goal of strengthening entry-level driver training and is ready and willing to assist in the development of higher standards for bus and motorcoach drivers, the association asserts that FMCSA has the process backwards.

"An 'accredited'/comprehensive classroom/behind-the-wheel training program with rigorous testing is simply inconsistent with the general low thresholds most states require for obtaining a CDL."

Meanwhile, FMCSA also is revising CDL testing and learner's permit standards (Docket No. FMCSA 2007-27659). Implementation of this rule could have significant implications for entry-level driver training, notes Presley.

"UMA suggests that further consideration of the proposed entry-level training rule be delayed until the effects of changes in CDL requirements are known."

The proposed rule sets up more comprehensive training as a prerequisite to obtaining a CDL. You wouldn't get your master's degree before you got your bachelor's. The "mandated and documented minimum training requirements" should be a "post-CDL attainment," not vice versa.

For the full text of the United Motorcoach Association's comments, go to [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov), FMCSA Docket No.-2007-27748, RIN 2126-AB06.

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ISSUE NO. 125

## Illinois operator makes news with clean-diesel coaches

Wanna see your company name in lights?

On TV? In the newspaper? Featured on the radio?

Just buy a new motorcoach (or two or three), and tell the world how “green” it (or they) are.

That’s what an increasing number of coach operators are doing and it seems to be working.

Take Peoria Charters of Peoria and Urbana, Ill., for example.

All three Peoria television stations, the local newspaper and radio stations sent reporters to Peoria Charter’s unveiling of three new MCI D4505 coaches powered by reduced-emissions Caterpillar engines.

“We saw our delivery as a great opportunity to show that we’re green,” said Peoria Charter President Bill Winkler.

Winkler credits the PR savvy of

his wife, Cindy, who is company vice president, and marketing support provided by MCI’s “Go Coach, Go Green, Go MCI” initiative for its successful media coverage.

“If it wasn’t for MCI taking the lead with its green campaign and marketing support, I don’t know if we would have thought to hold a press conference.”

Winkler used facts from MCI’s materials and then demonstrated the smokeless exhaust with a white-glove show-and-tell for the TV cameras.

In an interview with the *Peoria Star Journal*, Winkler pointed out that a coach loaded with 56 people, traveling 100 miles, uses 14 gallons of fuel, while taking the same number of people the same distance by auto would use 70 gallons of fuel.

“I was able to give the press

real numbers. That’s what they want,” said Winkler, who said the news coverage increased awareness of his company and of the industry.

“People in the community have said ‘I see you’re going green.’ Our industry is doing all this work and investing money toward improving the environment. People need to know what this industry is doing for the future.”

Peoria Charter’s new coaches, which also have ZF AS Tronic transmissions, replace older MCI models in its 59-bus fleet.

At its media event, Peoria Charter also noted that it uses an 11-percent biodiesel blend fuel, and recycles oil and tires.

Peoria Charter keeps its coaches on the road, providing charters and transportation to colleges and businesses around the state, plus



Peoria Charter President Bill Winkler, left rear, speaks to local media.

operating a daily airport shuttle between Peoria and Chicago.

“Our wheels are rolling,” said

Winkler. “As soon as the press conference ended, we sent the new coaches out.”

## Pacific Western rolls out luxury ‘green’ air shuttle

TORONTO — One of North America’s largest motorcoach operators, Pacific Western Transportation, has upgraded its shuttle between downtown and Lester B. Pearson Airport with more convenient, luxurious and “green” service.

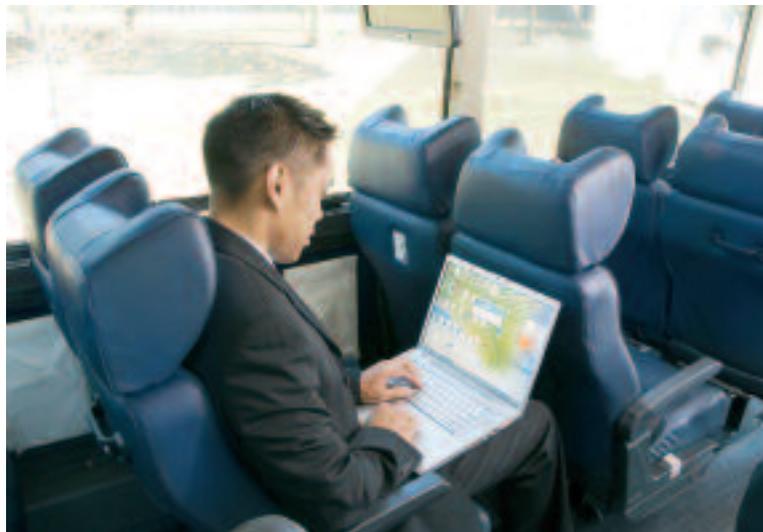
Pacific Western, the fourth largest motorcoach operator in North America, according to *Metro* magazine, unveiled a fleet of well-appointed, low-emissions Prevost coaches for its Airport Express service.

“Our passengers can cut greenhouse gases at the same time they relax in leather seats, enjoy Wi-Fi internet service, and pay considerably less than those using the average limousine or taxi service,” said Mark Hannah, Pacific Western vice president, motorcoach operations.

The Pacific Western’s Airport Express coaches now include:

- Passenger seat belts — a first for any scheduled run in North America
- Full accessibility for persons with disabilities
- Upscale leather seats and increased legroom
- Mobile Wi-Fi internet service and a lap top power outlet

In promoting its “green option



Airport Express coaches feature WiFi connections, outlets for laptop users.

for getting to the airport” through the local media, Pacific Western pointed out that it’s new coaches:

- Help reduce smog because the low-emissions engines produce 55 percent less nitrogen oxide and 90 percent less particulate matter than the previous generation of coaches
- Help cut green-house gases — that contribute to global warming — by using low-sulfur diesel fuel
- Increase fuel efficiency by using only 1.3 litres of diesel fuel

per 100 passenger kilometres, compared to 8.4 litres of gasoline per 100 passenger kilometres for a car with a single occupant — more than six times more efficient

- Shrink the “carbon footprint” by taking as many as 54 cars off the road and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by roughly 85 percent for each and every passenger

“There is no better or greener way to travel between downtown Toronto and Pearson airport,” said Hannah.



Downtown Toronto looms in the background as three new Airport Express ‘green’ coaches head to Pearson International Airport

The Pacific Western Airport Express makes 80 trips per day between Pearson International Airport and the downtown core.

## Canadian operators promote buses’ environmental pluses

TORONTO — Canadian motorcoach operators hope to boost their appeal by highlighting the environmental advantages of traveling by bus.

A brochure issued by Motor Coach Canada and the Ontario Motor Coach Association points

out that buses use significantly less fuel per passenger than cars.

“Let’s say you drive (alone) from Point A to Point B and use 20 litres of fuel. A motorcoach makes the same trip, with 56 people on board, and uses 280 litres of fuel. ... Each person on board the

motorcoach has used only five litres of fuel.”

As well, “the ultra low-sulphur diesel fuel used exclusively on motorcoaches burns cleaner than regular unleaded” gasoline, resulting in fewer greenhouse gas emissions, says the brochure.

Coaches are even more fuel efficient per passenger than hybrid cars, the brochure notes.

Titled *Reduce your footprint, take a motor coach*, the brochure is one of the ways that the two transportation groups are promoting the motorcoach and tour industry in

Canada, said Dave Willis of Ayr Coach Lines in Waterloo.

“The entire industry will benefit from the increased awareness of motorcoaches’ eco-friendly nature,” said Willis.

The brochure is available online at [www.motorcoachcanada.com](http://www.motorcoachcanada.com).

## Transit shenanigans

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

than a dozen requests — five of them from the Rochester-Genesee Regional Transportation Authority — for advisory opinions from transit agencies trying to protect charter work that they have been doing for years.

The FTA has ruled on five of them, saying that all but one appear to fall under the definition of charter in the new rules and should be offered first to private carriers.

They included park and ride shuttles to professional football and baseball games in Kansas City sought by the Kansas City Area Transit Authority and to the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles requested by Foothills Transit.

The FTA also said shuttles to an annual golf tournament in Silva, Ill., that Rock Island County Metropolitan Mass Transit wants to provide, and business convention shuttles in Queensbury, N.Y., that Greater Glens Falls Transit wants to operate appear to be charters as well.

However, the agency said Rock Island could run the golf shuttles if it initiated the service on its own and it was not sought by the event sponsors and Glens Falls could provide the convention shuttles if it charged its regular transit fare and did not negotiate a price with the businesses holding the conventions.

The FTA also issued a favorable opinion on one of the Rochester-Genesee requests, say-

ing the agency could contract with the county to provide bus service in the community during an officially declared emergency.

Meanwhile, news releases issued by transit agencies and news articles featuring the loss of some shuttle service by transit agencies are turning up in communities across the country.

An article in the *Business Courier* in Cincinnati reported that the Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority was trying to rally public support for an exemption from the FTA that would allow it to continue providing shuttle service to football games.

An article in *The Washington Post* about the loss of shuttle service to sports and entertainment events, including Redskins games, that had been provided by transit agencies drew a reply from FTA Administrator James S. Simpson.

Simpson pointed out in a letter to the newspaper that the article failed to mention how public and private bus operators worked together to develop the regulations and that they allow transit agencies to focus on their core mission of providing high quality, fixed-route bus service.

“All in all, we believe this regulation is a win-win for riders as well as all types of charter operators around the country,” he emphasized.

The push by some transit operators to get members of Congress to look into the rules brought some immediate action from Sen. Russ Feingold, a Wisconsin Democrat who

## Operators urged to go to FTA seminars

ALEXANDRIA, VA. — The United Motorcoach Association is urging its members to participate in a series of seminars being conducted this summer and fall by the Federal Transit Administration.

The seminars focus on creating public-private passenger transportation partnerships. They are expected to give private bus operators greater insight into working with their local transit agency, learning the ropes of how transit business is conducted, and getting in on the ground floor when public-private transit partnership opportunities develop.

The seminars will be at four

locations across the U.S.

Each seminar will feature speakers with specific experience in transit public-private partnerships. The seminars will also provide practical information, such as specific federal, state and local public-private partnerships laws, ways to leverage financing, how to facilitate public-private partnerships for transit-oriented development, plus a roundtable discussion on the mechanics of developing partnerships.

The FTA is working with the National Council for Public-Private Partnerships and other organizations to conduct the sem-

inars. Dates and cities are:

- June 11-12, Crown Plaza Hotel, Denver
- July 30-31, Hotel 480, San Francisco
- Sept. 17-18, Crown Plaza City Center Hotel, Philadelphia
- Oct. 22-23, Radisson Hotel Central Dallas, Dallas

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Typically, the seminars begin at 8 a.m. on the second day. The first day is for an evening networking reception.

For additional information, go to <http://www.ncppp.org>. E-mail Deputy FTA Administrator Sherry Little at [Sherry.Little@dot.gov](mailto:Sherry.Little@dot.gov).

fired off a letter to Simpson saying he has “serious concerns about the privatization of services long provided by public transit entities.”

He questioned provisions of the rules that deal with temporary shuttle service to special events, event sponsors contacting transit agencies if their negotiations with private carriers fail, game-day and season-long stadium bus service and the need for a private carrier to provide ancillary services requested by event sponsors.

A coalition of private motorcoach organizations quickly delivered a detailed, six-page letter to Simpson answering each of the issues raised by Feingold and stressing its strong support for the new rule.

“While we understand there are

numerous issues that have been raised by transit authorities on implementation of the final rule, we believe the final rule should be implemented and enforced vigorously,” wrote the coalition of the United Motorcoach Association, National School Transportation Association, International Motorcoach Group, Northwest Motorcoach Association, California Bus Association and Trailways.

It charged, too, that the number of requests for exemptions and advisory opinions have revealed that the volume of illegal charters being performed by transit authorities at subsidized or below market rates far exceeded the level of the activity that private carriers knew or had estimated.

“The illegal charters that have

been revealed through this process are in violation of grant agreements these properties have with the FTA,” it maintained.

The coalition asked Simpson to keep in mind the FTA mission of protecting the private motorcoach industry from transit agencies that illegally take away their business.

“Protecting private operators’ ability to compete in an open and competitive market without the hindrance of subsidized public transit authorities using federal tax dollars to unfairly compete is the very basis for the charter rules and Congressional direction to revise them,” the group maintained. “We implore FTA to hold fast to this principle.”

Feingold’s letter also drew a brief response from the American Bus Association, which reminded the FTA that game-day stadium bus service is clearly charter service.

However, it also said if transits want to run game-day shuttles, they could do so by increasing the number of buses on their regular routes as long as they do not take money from the event organizers or charge more than their regular bus fare.

## 5 hurricanes are forecast

CAMP SPRINGS, Md. — This year’s Atlantic hurricane season may be more active than usual, with as many as nine storms, which could include five major hurricanes.

That’s the ’08 forecast by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Climate Prediction Center.

At least two or three tropical storms, including a major hurricane, will likely reach the East Coast between Florida and New England, says the forecast.

The big Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 led to a steep climb in fuel prices after Gulf Coast refineries were closed in their wake.

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# 'Mama mia!' Bus driving in Italy presents challenges

By Don Harris

MILAN, Italy — Tour bus drivers in Italy face bizarre traffic challenges, especially in teeming cities like Naples, that would drive most American motorcoach drivers to a psychiatrist's couch.

It's the norm for motorbikes to zip in front of lumbering motorcoaches, cutting off two or three subcompact autos in the process. But because Italian tour bus drivers are familiar with the territory, they don't flinch as they maneuver between moving and stationary objects with barely an inch or two of clearance on either side.

Basically, whoever is gutsiest goes first. Of course, Italian motorists are smart enough to avoid confrontations with a tour bus.

Meanwhile, tour managers, who shepherd groups from city to city, in and out of restaurants and hotels, and to inviting destinations, are coping with edgy American visitors who don't think they're getting their dollar's worth.

And, they're not, because of an exchange rate that was more than \$1.60 per euro late this spring.

Sticker shock quickly sets in when they realize a 10-euro lunch really costs more than \$16 (U.S.).

## Driver stress grows

Romano Massara, 58, a tour bus driver in Italy for 34 years, says his job has become more stressful. While he never seems to lose his cool, Massara takes a quick cigarette break at every rest stop.

"It's a job," he says matter-of-factly. "It was a good job, but now there is too much stress because of the traffic. Everybody is in a hurry."

On a recent two-week Perillo Tours run from Rome to Milan, with numerous stops along the way, Massara managed to easily squeeze out of a couple of nerve-racking traffic situations. Not once did he or his passengers see an accident, but close calls were everywhere.

In Naples, two lanes are set aside for buses and trolley cars on busy midtown streets, with curbs separating them from other traffic. But motorists in cars and on motorbikes ignore the restriction (and the curbs), which leads to impossible congestion.

Massara attempted to pass a stalled trolley car, and came nose-to-nose with an oncoming bus. Both drivers paused, and Massara was able to inch back into his lane,

the stalled trolley moved ahead, and the Perillo bus was on its way.

"Naples traffic is the worst," he says. "It's go, go, go."

## Italian creativity

Massara was confronted with an even hairier challenge driving back to Florence from a day trip to Sienna. Traffic on the highway was at a complete standstill. Massara noticed that no other vehicles were entering the clogged road from an on-ramp so he embarked on a maneuver that he said later was "not normal."

Putting the 52-passenger 2001 Orlandi Domino HDH bus in reverse, he carefully and successfully managed to back off the highway using the entrance ramp. His task completed, Massara received a round of applause from his passengers, and he was able to take a less-congested route to Florence in time for his tour group's dinner.

## And the seatbelts?

Massara, who's employed by SATA, wears a natty blue blazer and a dress shirt and tie with the company insignia on them. He straps on his seat belt, and though the coach is equipped with seatbelts for all passengers, no one uses them.



This 52-passenger 2001 Orlandi Domino HDH is a typical tour coach in Italy.

The bus has a speed limiter that restricts his highway speed to 100 kilometers, or about 62 miles an hour.

Massara's colleague, tour manager Sandra Lagana, has been with Perillo since 1977. She's not surprised how easily Massara and other tour bus drivers deal with tight traffic squeezes.

"They drive the same size vehicle all the time and know how to judge what to do," says British-born Lagana. "If they had to switch from a smaller bus to a bigger one, that would be more of a challenge."

Entering several cities, including Venice, Florence and Sienna, tour buses are required to register with authorities and receive a permit to proceed.

"It helps these cities control the flow of bus traffic and it helps with the environment because buses aren't clogging the streets," Lagana says.

She's on call 24 hours a day, whereas a driver can walk away from a bus at the end of the day and relax, but there are exceptions.

Massara's bus developed a computer problem in Florence and he was able to get it to a company

garage for repairs late one night. A second Perillo bus was summoned to transport the group back to their hotel after dinner.

Lagana's goal is to please everybody, which isn't always possible, of course. Occasionally tourists wander away from the group and become lost. Her job is to track them down, keeping the bus from leaving until everyone is aboard. Such delays rankle the rest of the group.

The best part of her job, she says, is when she hears people say they will take another Perillo tour and that they're happy with her presentations and the detailed information she shares.

At one point, when the bus had to detour through another part of a town, Lagana had information on some of those off-the-beaten track sights, knowledge gained from her years in the tourism profession.

Lagana says she doesn't consider her job tough, though the hours are long and the breaks are brief.

About an hour after dropping off one tour group at the Milan airport, she was set to greet another Perillo group. "It's my livelihood," she says.

Don Harris writes frequently for Bus & Motorcoach News. He took a bus tour of Italy this spring.

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## Security grants

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

everyone else, smaller operators do not have to "compete" directly with the industry giants for money.

The dollar breakdown for fiscal '08 was:

- Tier I: \$6.1 million for operators that have 250 or more over-the-road buses.

- Tier II: \$5 million for operators that own 249 or fewer over-the-road buses.

There are eight operators in the U.S. with 250 or more motorcoaches that were eligible to compete for the \$6.1 million, while the remaining 3,000+ U.S. operators with 249 or fewer coaches competed for the \$5 million share.

There is no minimum number of motorcoaches necessary for an operator to apply, but those seeking the money must provide at least 50 trips annually into areas the Department of Homeland Security has determined to be most at risk of a terrorist attack.

Operators typically use the grant money to install security cameras and fencing, buy explosive screening equipment, install driver shields, and add global positioning satellite tracking systems to their coaches. Thousands of coaches now have sophisticated GPS systems today as a result of the security grant program, aiding

## Operators awarded 2008 bus security grants

Academy Express: \$836,953 – Hoboken, N.J.  
 American Coach: \$296,999 – Miami  
 Anchor Tours: \$72,801 – Whites Creek, Tenn.  
 Anderson Coach and Travel: \$82,014 – Greenville, Pa.  
 Burlington Trailways: \$8,928 – West Burlington, Iowa  
 Arrow Stage Lines/Busco: \$188,606 – Omaha  
 Calco Travel: \$109,892 – Lutcher, La.  
 Coach America: \$450,906 – Dallas  
 Coach USA: \$739,350 – Paramus, N.J.  
 DATTCO: \$86,745 – New Britain, Conn.  
 David Thomas Tours: \$143,453 – Philadelphia  
 DeCamp Bus Lines: \$136,425 – Montclair, N.J.  
 Easton Coach Company: \$91,978 – Easton, Pa.  
 Escot Bus Lines: \$206,692 – Largo, Fla.  
 Fullington Auto Bus Co.: \$8,336 – Clearfield, Pa.  
 Golden Ring Travel/Trans.: \$96,806 – Baltimore  
 Grand Island Tours: \$31,200 – Lockport, N.Y.  
 Greyhound Lines: \$3,459,500 – Dallas

Hotard Coaches: \$159,307 – New Orleans  
 Hubers Bus Service: \$49,974 – Glen Burnie, Md.  
 Industrial Bus Lines: \$199,274 – Odessa, Texas  
 Keller Transportation: \$76,009 – Waldorf, Md.  
 Klein Transportation: \$60,615 – Douglassville, Pa.  
 Krapf Coaches: \$65,043 – Exton, Pa.  
 Lakeland Bus Lines: \$135,527 – Dover, N.J.  
 Lamers Bus Lines: \$232,520 – Green Bay, Wis.  
 Lancaster Tours: \$24,914 – Lancaster, S.C.  
 Gray Line of Nashville: \$222,484 – Nashville  
 Local Motion of Boston: \$15,975 – Newton, Mass.  
 Miller Transportation: \$206,500 – Louisville, Ky.  
 Monroe Bus Corp.: \$34,763 – Brooklyn, N.Y.  
 Monsey New Square Trails: \$34,763 – Spring Valley, N.Y.  
 Northwestern Stage Lines: \$6,621 – Spokane, Wash.  
 Peter Pan Bus Lines: \$674,865 – Springfield, Mass.  
 Plymouth & Brockton St. Rlwy: \$23,484 –

Plymouth, Mass.  
 Premier Coach Company: \$230,632 – Colchester, Vt.  
 Private One of New York: \$129,702 – Brooklyn  
 Ramblin Express: \$184,415 – Colorado Springs  
 Royal Coach Tours: \$110,164 – San Jose, Calif.  
 Ryan's Express Services: \$355,584 – North Las Vegas, Nev.  
 Classic Coach: \$158,936 – Bohemia, N.Y.  
 Southeastern Stages: \$111,490 – Atlanta  
 Star Shuttle and Tour: \$46,410 – San Antonio, Texas  
 Starkville Trailways: \$8,927 – Starkville, Miss.  
 Starr Transit Company: \$73,313 – Trenton, N.J.  
 Stout's Charter Service: \$124,614 – Ewing, N.J.  
 Sun Diego Charter Co.: \$139,675 – National City, Calif.  
 Yankee Trails World Travel: \$157,091 – Rensselaer, N.Y.  
 Wilson Bus Lines: \$71,075 – Templeton, Mass.

operators in ways that go far beyond security.

The Intercity Bus Security Grant Program is a small piece of the Department of Homeland Security Infrastructure Protection

Program, which totals \$844 million this year, up from \$445 million in fiscal '07. The big winner this year was public transit. Other elements of the program include port and intercity rail security; grants to pro-

tect dams, power plants, nuclear facilities, stadiums, arenas and chemical plants, and the Highway Watch program.

This year, the Department of Homeland Security allocate \$380.1

million for the Transit Security Grant Program, under which eight urban areas identified as being the highest risk for a terrorist attack will receive a total of \$333.2 million, a 46 percent increase compared with 2007. In addition, 23 Tier II urban areas will receive a total of \$16.9 million.

DHS also is providing \$25 million for Amtrak to secure track and tunnels, train employees in counter-terrorism measures and expand visible deterrence initiatives.

## Directory of Canadian motorcoach, tour operators is released

TORONTO — Motor Coach Canada has announced the availability of the 2008 *Directory of Motor Coach and Tour Operators in Canada*.

The directory is designed both to facilitate travel to and within Canada, and to promote the services of Motor Coach Canada's members throughout Canada and

to international inbound markets.

The directory is widely distributed at events and by mailings.

For more information, e-mail [info@motorcoachcanada.com](mailto:info@motorcoachcanada.com).

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# A few thoughts on right sizing your motorcoach fleet

By Dave Millhouser

"To be or not to be?"... is not the question.

"How big should my fleet be?" is far more relevant to profitability in our business.

Someone (way smarter than me) once said he'd never seen another industry that incurred so much debt to meet peak demand.

The correct goal is achieving the delicate balance between maximizing utilization without passing up too many opportunities.

Heck, you knew that, but how do you arrive at the right size?

The folks I respect most do serious analysis of their sales, and know how many days each bus in their fleet is used. They also look at the revenue side because running a bus at cost (or less) during slow times doesn't help the bottom line and exposes you to risks that may eventually bite you. They don't buy buses to "turn wheels."

Lots of coaches have been bought, over the years, to meet sudden "opportunities" that didn't really use the bus enough of the year. Operators hoped to generate enough extra business to make it work. "Hope" is a risky marketing

plan.

Even when the opportunity is year round, it's important to know how long it's REALLY going to last. Real excitement is financing a coach for seven years but losing the contract after three — just as the warranty runs out.

Bus fleets are like cell phones — smaller is better. If you are a little bit too small you can usually find an extra coach or two when things get tight. The only serious risk by being too small is that you'll chase some business to a competitor. This pales in comparison to being too large.

If you have too many buses, and business slows, the first sacrifice is price. Trips are run on miniscule margins, often during the nastiest, riskiest time of the year.

What happens next can be even uglier: customers are now trained to expect cheap transportation. No amount of explanation about the seasonal nature of the charter business will ever quite convince them they aren't being gouged during peak periods.

A certain amount of fluctuation is accepted, but when the spread gets big, operators lose credibility,

or profit.

If all the carriers in a region independently reach the same conclusion that it's best to size their company to meet normal, not peak, demand, prices migrate upward.

An ideal fleet has some buses that are paid for. When those jewels are sitting, it doesn't cause too much heartburn, and they are available to seize opportunities that are real. An all new fleet sounds good, but is UGLY when it's parked.

Many well-run companies have fleets that are a mix of new and older coaches, with the mix being determined by their mechanical skills and customer demands.

Conventional wisdom has been that you're better off with a single brand of coach (even a single model). In recent years a number of operators, both midsize and large, have consciously decided to run two brands of coaches. Each approach has strengths worth considering.

Having a single model of coach simplifies maintenance, cuts parts inventory, and makes driver training simpler. Your operations folks use fewer brain cells deciding which bus goes where.

Different models, from the same manufacturer, still offer the advantage of a single relationship with parts and technical people, and some parts commonality. Often a manufacturer's different models share components and a philosophy of maintenance that will serve you well.

There are a few downsides to a one-vendor approach. A single meteor, the size of a basketball, could destroy his factory. That hasn't happened yet, but we have had plants shut down by fire, flood and financial woes. A problem with one manufacturer would create a shortage, and the other builders would serve existing customers first. A lengthy disruption could cause that brand's resale value to plummet, having two brands hedges your bet.

These days, delivery of parts is so efficient that most operators stock fewer parts, so inventory is less important. Most manufacturers have good technical support, so you're less likely to be left dangling than in ye olden days.

Buses are not commodities... where cheapest is best. Your manufacturer is your partner and the relationship should be profitable

and pleasant for both sides. If you only shop price, most manufacturers will lose interest.

On the other hand, all are happy to sell to a company that maintains a real bond with two builders, rewarding the most responsive with a larger share of each order. They value and compete for that kind of customer.

Each company's situation is different, so the decision on size and makeup of your fleet is an individual one.

When I was in sales, if you were buying from me, I always recommended that you stick with the standardized fleet approach. If you'd been buying from the other guys, I urged you to consider the two manufacturer plan. I could be at your place in an hour.

Dave Millhouser is a bus industry marketing consultant and freelance writer. Contact him at: [dave\\_millhouser@hotmail.com](mailto:dave_millhouser@hotmail.com).



Dave Millhouser

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## 2010 engines

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the other hand, circulates some engine exhaust gas back into the engine to cool combustion, reducing NOx.

The cost to develop both technologies has been enormously expensive.

Daimler, owner of Setra and Detroit Diesel, and Volvo AB, which owns Prevost Car and produces Volvo-brand engines, have said they will use SCR, which is used widely in Europe but is new to North America, for their 2010 heavy-duty engines.

International Truck and Engine Corp. will use only exhaust gas recirculation, which has been used in motorcoaches and trucks since 2002, while engine maker Cummins Inc. will use SCR for its medium-duty engines and EGR for its heavy-duty models.

Caterpillar has not yet announced what technology it will use. Cat's delay has spurred widespread speculation, ranging from talk it's having trouble meeting the

# Supplier says it will meet urea requirement

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — The world's largest distributor of chemicals has announced it will supply urea to the North American truck and bus industries in time to meet the 2010 federal emissions standards.

Brenntag, which calls itself the largest distributor of automotive-grade urea in the world, said it will be ready to meet demands in two years.

Some of the manufacturers that supply engines to the bus and truck industries will require that urea be used in conjunction with their selective catalytic reduction systems, starting in 2010.

Both Volvo Group, which supplies engines for Prevost, and

new exhaust standards, to suggestions it may be planning to bail out of the on-highway engine market. Stay tuned.

In briefings, executives from International have pointed out the significant differences between the two technologies, noting specifically the "extra components" used

Daimler, which supplies engines to Setra, have announced they will use selective catalytic reduction to comply with the next round of EPA emissions requirements.

In response, Brenntag has launched what it calls "Urea 2010," which the company says will assure there are adequate supplies of urea for OEMs and fleet operators throughout the U.S. and Canada.

"Brenntag understands the complexity of a start-up (for urea) and we are applying our experience and knowledge to successfully launch a customer-friendly package to manufacturers and fleet operators" of (selective catalytic reduction) vehicles, said Chet Murphy, vice president of market development at Brenntag.

Navistar, which is International's corporate parent, has published

a pamphlet that asserts, "There is no delivery infrastructure in place to support urea distribution in North America for 2010... the need for urea demands a separate tank that will add weight and reduce payload... SCR urea must be a high grade and a precise solution to avoid catalyst damage and assure

system integrity."

Navistar's claim of urea availability problems is disputed. Spokesmen from Volvo and Daimler point out that only a tiny amount of urea is needed for each gallon of diesel.

According to one calculation, if a motorcoach has a 230-gallon diesel tank, the urea tank would only have to be 5.75 gallons to run the coach for two-and-a-half to three fill-ups.

Daimler, other truck makers and independent suppliers are working to establish a nationwide urea distribution system. (See related article above.)

Meanwhile, Cummins contends that long-distance fleets "do not need another component to worry about" in running their businesses, especially something that can shut them down, such as being unable to find urea.

2010 SCR-equipped vehicles must have a system to de-power and eventually shut down the engine if the system runs out of urea.

Meanwhile, supporters of SCR note the technology is being used successfully in Europe and they decry the "misinformation and scare tactics" about SCR.

Before SCR was introduced in Europe earlier in this decade there were doubts urea would be available but most of the perceived SCR issues vanished after it hit the road.

And, despite some reports, drivers will not have to add urea to fuel and will not have to fill their vehicle's urea tank every time they buy fuel. One tankful of urea will be enough for several tanks of diesel fuel.

SCR supporters also note that — by using the technology — they will be able to cut NOx to acceptable levels without increasing the amount of exhaust gas recirculation in their engines.

Because EGR causes engines to run hotter and decreases fuel mileage, use of SCR will improve efficiency, they say.

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## Stallion Bus gets new v.p., to introduce 30-seat model

CORONA, Calif. — Stallion Bus Industries, one of the handful of new manufacturers trying to carve out a niche in the 35-foot coach market, has named a new vice president of manufacturing and announced plans to introduce a 30-seat model.

Stallion sprang on the scene 18 months ago with the Sunliner, initially introduced as a 35-foot model, featuring a body built in China mounted on the popular Freightliner XBR-series, rear-engine chassis.

Jim Larue, a veteran bus executive and engineer who traces his industry roots back more than 35 years to Eagle International in At \$4+ per gallon...

SCHAUMBURG, Ill. — Automobile manufacturers are doing it. So are car dealers.

Now, a coach manufacturer has jumped on the fuel-with-a-vehicle-purchase bandwagon.

Motor Coach Industries is offering up to \$ 5,000 in fuel with the purchase of a new Fast Track MCI D4505 model or qualifying pre-owned coach.

Brownsville, Texas, now heads Stallion's manufacturing operation in Corona, near Los Angeles.

Larue's industry experience also includes working at Transportation Manufacturing Corp. in Roswell, N.M.; at transit bus maker New Flyer Industries, where he was director of manufacturing, and at Neoplan in Lamar, Colo., where he was the company's last vice president of manufacturing. Neoplan was shut down just over two years ago.

Stallion and its body-on-rail Sunliner models present a new challenge for Larue that he's excited about tackling.

He says Stallion buses are designed and built with customers' drivers and maintenance departments in mind. "Ergonomics play an essential role in each vehicle," says Larue. "Placement of driver controls and easy access to vehicle maintenance points definitely make a Stallion coach user friendly."

Larue also says Stallion is determined to deliver high quality buses that are safe, fuel efficient, durable and perform.

"Stallion takes the lead over the competition by offering almost



Jim Larue of Stallion Bus

twice the fuel economy of conventional coaches (read 45-footers) at approximately half the cost. The environment benefits as well, as less fuel usage equals less pollution."

The Stallion Sunliner comes equipped with a Cummins ISB engine, ZF independent suspension that allows a 60-degree wheel cut, and front air suspension.

The 30-seat model, known as the 800 series, will be introduced in the fourth quarter.

Stallion coaches are covered by a five-year/300,000 mile comprehensive warranty that, says Larue, stands on its own merits as being among the best offered.

Stallion Bus is headquartered in New Milford, Conn., with direct sales outlets in Connecticut, Florida, North Carolina, Michigan, Arizona and California.

## National Seating's Tom York dies at 65; memorial June 27th

MONTOUR FALLS, N.Y. — Tom York, veteran regional sales manager for National Seating Co., died last month of a brain tumor. He was 65.

Mr. York represented National Seating in New England for more than 20 years, developing a well-deserved reputation for providing exceptional service to his customers.

"He was legendary for resolving problems," said a friend. "Tom was like a heat seeking missile — fire and forget. If a customer bought National Seats and had a problem, one call to Tom and it was solved."

Mr. York was a veteran, a former bus operator in the Finger

Lakes region of New York, an entrepreneur, and a long-time member, supporter and former secretary-treasurer of the New England Bus Association. He supported other state associations as well.

There will be a military graveside memorial service at 11 a.m. June 27 at the Bath National Cemetery in Bath, N.Y.

Mr. York's family has asked that individuals wishing to memorialize Mr. York should send a donation to the American Cancer Society or the charity of their choice. Confirmations of donations can be mailed to Mr. York's widow, Denise York, at P.O. Box 819, Montour Falls, NY 14865.

## Calendar

### JUNE 2008

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

**20-22 Bus History Association 2008 Convention, Holiday Inn Manchester Airport, Man-**

chester, N.H. Info: Go to [www.bus-history.org](http://www.bus-history.org).

**24-26 National Tour Association Grassroots Symposium, Washington, D.C.** Info: Go to [www.NTA.travel](http://www.NTA.travel).

**26-29 New England Bus Association Annual Meeting, MGM Grand at Foxwoods, Mashantucket, Conn.** Info: Go to [www.newenglandbus.org](http://www.newenglandbus.org).

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