

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

THE NEWS RESOURCE FOR THE BUS AND MOTORCOACH INDUSTRY

Motor Coach Industries refinances, reduces debt

SCHAUMBURG, Ill. – Motor Coach Industries International Inc. has refinanced its senior secured debt, and simultaneously reduced its total debt in a equity swap.

Acting to beat an expected run-up in interest rates during the next year, MCI refinanced senior company debt that was due in June of next year, obtaining new credit terms that extend the debt through Dec. 1, 2008.

Most economists believe the Fed almost certainly will take actions in the coming months that will result in interest rates rising 75 to 100 basis points by early next year.

As part of MCI's refinancing, the Wall Street investment company that owns control of the nation's largest motorcoach manufacturer also decided it would reduce

MCI's overall debt.

JLL Partners of New York City swapped more than \$100 million of MCI debt it acquired on the open market for additional equity.

Because neither MCI nor JLL are public companies they are under no obligation to disclose specific details of MCI's debt or JLL's equity stake. When JLL bought MCI five years ago, the company had roughly \$450 million in long-term debt.

Ramsey Frank, senior managing director at JLL Partners said, "We continue to be pleased with our investment in MCI. The management has done an excellent job to streamline the company's cost structure and to expand market share during the industry downturn.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13 ►

Abundance of challenges threaten Henlys Group

BOREHAMWOOD, England – Henlys Group PLC, the British company that lays claim to being the largest manufacturer of buses and coaches in the U.S. and Canada, has been beaten to a pulp by the prolonged slump of the North American bus market and problems at its school bus manufacturing subsidiary.

In a series of rapid-fire developments in mid-June, Henlys revealed that its shares are largely worthless and it's having them delisted on the London Stock Exchange. Additionally, it has named two turnaround specialists to its top executive positions and it's working with its banks and other creditors to try to salvage the company.

Whether it will succeed – given

its huge debt and continuing losses – is problematic.

Henlys, which is headquartered in the London suburb of Borehamwood, Hertfordshire, owns 100 percent of Blue Bird Corp., the largest school bus maker in the U.S., and half of Prevost Car and its subsidiary, Nova Bus. Volvo Bus Corp. owns the other half of Prevost and Nova Bus.

"The board's aim is to achieve a restructuring which preserves the group's principal operating businesses in North America and offers significant prospects for an enhancement of operating performance, leading in turn to improvements in value in the longer term," Henlys said in a statement.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12 ►

Tortured Takeover

Problems plague transfer of N.Y. Service

NEW YORK CITY – The planned July 1 takeover by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority of more than 80 bus routes now operated by private companies is moving forward – in fits and starts.

Those familiar with the oft-times contentious negotiations between the city and the private companies say a variety of issues have slowed progress, creating a charged atmosphere that has fostered talk of a walk-out by drivers and other difficulties.

"We just don't know what's going on and probably won't until the very end," said Martin Burke, vice president of Queens Surface Corp., one of the seven companies that transports about 400,000 daily



Green Bus Lines is one of the seven companies being displaced by New York MTA.

commuters into Manhattan from the Bronx, Queens and Brooklyn.

The talks have involved a wide range of controversial issues, including the hiring of union drivers by the MTA, the fate of non-union

employees of the seven private companies, worker compensation, and what will become of the bus terminals and other facilities now owned by the private operators.

"All I can tell you is that we are in the midst of extremely complicated negotiations with the private bus lines," said city spokesman Jordan Baowitz.

MTA spokesman Tom Kelly said the authority has been preparing for the takeover for some time and is ready to go. "If all of the contracts are signed and the legislation is completed, then we will take over fully on July 1 as planned," he said.

The city has been pushing for the takeover for about two years,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14 ►

No mandatory safety briefings

WASHINGTON – The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has decided against developing regulations that would require motorcoach operators to conduct passenger safety briefings.

In a letter and memo to the National Transportation Safety Board, FMCSA Administrator Annette Sandberg said that "creation of a regulatory requirement for motorcoach operating companies to conduct pretrip safety briefings for passengers is not the optimum approach due to the composition of the industry.

"That is, the majority of the motorcoach operating industry is composed of small companies with fewer than 10 buses each," said Sandberg. "Moreover, there is wide operational variance in the industry, making it inappropriate to apply one basic regulatory approach universally."

The idea of developing federal regulations that would require motorcoach passenger safety briefings – similar to those on airlines – has

been under active consideration by the FMCSA for more than a year. The impetus for mandated briefings came from two recommendations made by the NTSB.

The federal crash investigation agency had urged the FMCSA to require motorcoach operators to provide passenger safety briefings and said the FMCSA ought to provide guidance to motorcoach operators on the minimum information that should be included in such briefings.

In the spring of last year, the



Annette Sandberg

FMCSA held informal meetings with the United Motorcoach Association, the American Bus Association and the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance to discuss the NTSB recommendations.

Those meetings resulted in the formation of a working group to consider the issue. Included in the working group were representatives from Greyhound Lines, Coach USA, Setra, Prevost Car, Motor Coach Industries, Daecher Consulting Group, UMA and three federal agencies.

The working group concluded that the best approach for dealing with the issue was to develop alternative approaches to the imposition of federal regulations. The final recommendation was for the FMCSA to aggressively promote motorcoach safety best practices

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14 ►

The Next Best Thing to New:

MCI Certified Pre-Owned

- Select models, year 2000 and newer
- Extended Warranties



Call 1 866 MCI Coach or visit www.mcicoach.com to search our pre-owned inventory

Pre-Owned

Van Hool Conversions!

On select models 6 month
lease terms as low as

\$4,495* per month

*With approved credit; additional terms and conditions may apply.

The only TRUE European Conversion Coach In The Market!!

VIP



1999 T945
VIN 29759

Shower, 2 Refrigerators,
Restroom, Alum. Wheels,
B500R Trans.



1999 T945
VIN 29742

Seats 26, Corian Counter Tops,
In-Motion Satellite, Deluxe A/V,
Trash Compactor



2000 T945
VIN 29731

Seats 22, Corian Counter Tops,
In-Motion Satellite, Full Size
Refrigerator



1997 T945
VIN 28580

Seats 11, Jacuzzi Tub w/shower,
Full Size Refrigerator,
2 Burner Cook Top

Motorhome



1996 T845
VIN 28537

B500 Trans., Corian Counter Tops,
Dual Refrigerator
In-Motion Satellite



1998 T945
VIN 29707

12 Bunks, Michelin Tires,
Converted by Caldwell
Coach, B500 Trans.



2000 T945
VIN 29741

12 Bunks, w-Shower,
Tow Hook, Goodyear Tires,
B500R Trans.



1999 T945
VIN 29710

12 Bunks, 2 TV's with Video
Cassette, Refrigerator,
Microwave, 2 Stereos



1996 T845
VIN 28492

12 Bunks, w-shower,
Microwave, Corian
Counter Tops,
B500 Trans.



View ABC's On-Line Inventory At
www.abc-companies.com

WESTERN
800-322-2877

SOUTHEAST
800-222-2871

MIDWEST
800-222-2875

NORTHEAST
800-222-2873

SOUTHWEST
800-222-2877



Exclusive U.S.  Distributor

Call Your Account Executive Today!

Transit agency in Ohio violated federal rules

ZANESVILLE, Ohio — An investigation of South East Area Transit by the Ohio Department of Transportation has found the public transit agency violated federal transit rules, including providing bus service outside its service area.

The investigation was prompted by a half-dozen complaints filed with the Federal Transit Administration by Advanced Coach, a tour and charter operator based in Zanesville.

The FTA sent the complaints to

the Ohio Department of Transportation which conducted an inquiry into services provided by South East Area Transit. ODOT Administrator Marianne E. Freed said her agency was able to verify that some of Advanced Coach's allegations were founded, while others were determined to be unfounded.

She said ODOT conducted its investigation by sorting through the various documents submitted by Advanced Coach and addressing each of the allegations.

Four of the complaints lodged by Advanced Coach were determined to be unfounded, including two allegations that SEAT violated federal rules by entering into contracts for charter service with the Muskingum County Department of Jobs and Family Services and a social service agency.

The other unfounded complaints had to do with whether SEAT costs were fully allocated in bidding for transit services, and allegations SEAT steered charter

inquiries received by the transit agency to specific firms on a disproportionate basis.

ODOT did confirm, however, SEAT was providing transportation well beyond its service area. In fact, on occasion it traveled all the way to Cleveland, a distance of roughly 145 miles. Freed's office issued a cease-and-desist order to stop SEAT from providing service that is outside its service area.

Additionally, the investigation found that SEAT was providing

various other services in violation of federal charter service rules.

"In light of the existence of known willing and able private charter operators, SEAT is advised that it is not permitted to operate services which do not meet this exception, or any of the other identified exceptions, unless an agreement has been reached to do so with the willing and able charter companies," Freed said.

Advanced Coach is headed by John Butcher.



Greyhound creates post to study new technology

DALLAS — The accelerating pace of new federal emissions standards for diesel engines has promoted Greyhound Lines to create a new position to help it evaluate the latest engines and pollution-reduction technology.

The new management position is called vice president, technical operations, and Greyhound has hired Peter A. Palladino, a former executive of both Cummins and Motor Coach Industries, to fill it.

In addition to dealing with the rapid changes in engine technology and emissions standards, Palladino also will oversee Greyhound's maintenance and engineering operations, as well as the purchase and disposal of the company fleet in the U.S. and Canada. Greyhound operates upwards of 2,400 coaches.

Palladino joins Greyhound with 34 years of diverse transportation experience in motorcoaches, trucks and power trains. Most recently, he was vice president of major accounts at MCI, meaning Greyhound was one of his customers.

During his four years at MCI, Palladino also had served as vice president of sales and marketing, and had responsibilities in fleet support and product planning.

Prior to being hired at MCI by

former CEO Robert Cordaro, Palladino spent more than 30 years at Cummins, the diesel engine maker.

One of Palladino's first chores at Greyhound will be to evaluate the performance of 20 new G4500 models MCI recently delivered. The wheelchair lift-equipped G coaches are the first produced on MCI's new combined E/J/G-production line at its retooled Winnipeg, Manitoba, assembly plant.

All of the coaches are equipped with ZF-AS Tronic transmissions. However, 10 of the buses have Detroit Diesel Series 60 engines, using cooled-EGR systems to reduce engine emissions, while the other 10 are powered by Caterpillar C-13 engines with ACERT emissions-reduction technology.

The side-by-side engine testing will evaluate a whole range of life-cycle and cost factors, including longevity, dependability, maintainability, serviceability, fuel economy and performance.

The evaluation also will include the ZF transmissions, which Greyhound has been studying for nearly two years. The company has had two ZF-equipped coaches on the road and reportedly has been favorably impressed by gains in fuel economy.

AT YOUR SERVICE FOR EVERY SERVICE



Top five reasons to rely on MCI Fleet Support:

- ✓ Full-service capabilities
- ✓ Factory-trained certified technicians
- ✓ Genuine MCI® Parts in stock
- ✓ Convenient hours — open early and late
- ✓ Quick turnaround times



*We're always looking to save you money!
Ask about one of our Coach Maintenance Agreements.*

Look to MCI Fleet Support for:

- HVAC
- Alignment
- Washing and Detailing
- Engine and Transmission
- Over-the-Counter OEM Parts Sales
- Wheelchair Lift Repair & Retrofit*

SERVICE SPECIALS THROUGH 9/30/04:

Oil Change
(Oil/filters/labor)
\$159.99

A/C Express Service
\$499.99

MCI FLEET SUPPORT SERVICE CENTERS

Blackwood, NJ
800 262 1287
Des Plaines, IL
800 743-3624
Loudonville, OH*
877 754-4404
Montreal, P.Q.
800 663-3328

Dallas, TX
800 248-4942
Los Alamitos, CA*
800 777 4101
Orlando, FL
800 390-0287

AUTHORIZED MCI SERVICE PROVIDERS

Alban Engine Power Systems
Baltimore, MD
800 443 9813
Cashman Equipment Co.
Las Vegas, NV
800 937 2326

W.W. Williams
Atlanta, GA
888 826 9106
Foley Inc.
Piscataway, NJ
800 228 3406



MCI FLEET SUPPORT

Nobody knows your coach better.

©Motor Coach Industries International, Inc.
2004, All Rights Reserved

www.mcicoach.com

THE DOCKET

EPA wants to retrofit 11 million diesel engines

WASHINGTON – Officials at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency want to retrofit all 11 million diesel engines in the country, including those on buses and motorcoaches, within 10 years to reduce emissions of particulate matter.

EPA officials announced the ambitious goal at a Diesel Technology Forum here last month.

Margo Oge, director of the EPA's Office of Transportation and Air Quality, said the agency would

work with fleets to develop financial incentives to accomplish the retrofitting.

"We're in the middle of seeing the most dramatic transformation of diesel engines ever," Oge said. "We have a huge job ahead of us to address the existing diesel fleets."

It is estimated that the cost of retrofitting 11 million diesel engines could be in the billions of dollars; certainly hundreds of millions.

The price tag would depend

largely on how clean EPA thinks older engines should be. For example, sophisticated particulate matter filters, combined with ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel, can reduce PM emissions by 90 percent at a cost of \$4,000 to \$8,000 per vehicle.

Diesel oxidation catalysts, on the other hand, operating without ultra-low sulfur diesel, can reduce particulate matter by 20 percent at a cost of between \$800 and \$1,500 per vehicle.

All diesel engines from buses

and trucks to construction equipment would be targeted for the retrofit program. However, EPA officials made it clear the agency would not seek to make its retrofit program mandatory.

Truckers – both local fleet operations and over-the-road carriers – apparently will be the first target of the program. EPA officials said they would begin working with small trucking fleets next year to develop a grant-based incentive program to help

them retrofit older trucks to reduce emissions.

EPA has offered limited retrofit incentive programs during the past two years to the school bus industry and other "sensitive populations" where there is considerable pressure from parents, schools and the public to reduce tailpipe emissions.

So far, the program to school bus operators has been relatively small with grants totaling less than \$2 million being handed out.

Truth in fines is on its way to Santa Fe

SANTA FE, N.M. – This popular tourist destination city appears to be one of the most aggressive communities in the nation at citing people for driving while talking on a cell phone. (Coach drivers you're now warned!)

Through the middle of June, 516 people had been ticketed.

While Santa Fe's ban on driving while using a cellular phone without a hands-free speaking device is generally considered unpopular, it's the hidden costs attached to cell-phone citations that have caused the most outrage.

That's probably due to misleading signs on the outskirts of the city that indicate violating the ordinance will cost motorists \$60 per offense. While the cost of the fine is, in fact, \$60, people cited soon find out that \$41 in court costs and processing fees bring the total tab for the citation to \$101.

After getting a string of complaints, police and the city have agreed the city should replace the signs to more accurately reflect the total cost of being cited.

Six signs on roadways entering the city will be replaced with new signs that reflect the court fee and the fine. Well, almost.

Actually, the signs will say it's a \$100 violation. Violators will find out about the other dollar when they pay.



U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta participated in Roadcheck 2004 last month. He affixed an inspection sticker after a truck was inspected at a weigh station near Hyattstown, Md.

EPA proposes extending compliance with spill rule

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has announced plans to delay an August deadline for private companies, including bus and truck companies, to detail how they plan to contain oil spills on their property.

The EPA said it wanted to extend the deadline for a year so as not to put facilities in an untenable position of not having enough time to comply with the deadline for having a revised oil-spill containment plan.

The EPA has been under pressure from industry groups, plus members of Congress, to grant an extension.

The EPA's spill-containment regulation was established 30 years ago and revised in 2002. However, many groups asked for an extension in implementing the 2002 changes because they said the rule was too vague. Some organizations went to court to stop the

implementation.

Finally, last month, EPA proposed a 12-month extension of key compliance dates for preparing and implementing Spill Prevention, Control and Countermeasure Plans required under the 2002 Oil Pollution Prevention regulation.

Under the regulation, facilities with an accumulative above-ground storage "capacity" of more than 1,320 gallons of oil or petroleum-based products must develop and implement a plan to prevent potential spills from reaching navigable waters.

EPA has traditionally included diesel fuel tanks greater than 55-gallons in determining the 1,320-gallon threshold.

EPA is proposing to extend the dates to prepare and implement plans from Aug. 17, 2004, and Feb. 18, 2005, respectively, by one year.

Deadline is near for coach security grants

WASHINGTON – The deadline for motorcoach companies to apply for federal grants to improve security for their passengers, buses and operations is fast approaching.

The deadline for applying for the U.S. Transportation Security Administration grants is July 7. The TSA will award a total of \$9.9 million to improve over-the-road bus security.

Last August, TSA awarded nearly \$15 million in bus security grants to operators in 24 states.

Money from the TSA's Intercity Bus Security Grant Program is to be used by operators to improve security for their businesses and passengers, and to provide training for employees.

To find information about the grants, go to www.tsa.gov and look for a link called "Business Opportunities." Click on the link. When the Business Opportunities page pops up, look for a link on the left side called "Contracting with TSA." Click on that link.

Security technology report coming

CHICAGO – A Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration official says the agency plans to have a study of transportation security technologies ready by Oct. 1.

The two-year study, funded jointly by FMCSA and the Federal Highway Administration's Intelligent Transportation Systems Joint Program Office, is examining how several types of technologies help

When that page pops up, look in the center of the page for the words "Bus Security Grants." Clicking on those words will take you to a page announcing the Intercity Bus Security Grants. Below the announcement are links to various forms, instructions, checklists, explanations and other documents to guide applicants.

There's also a document that explains who can apply, a list of frequently asked questions, and a sample proposal.

Last year, 57 coach companies were awarded grants ranging from \$9,900 to \$5 million.

Additionally, the United Motorcoach Association and the American Bus Association received awards. UMA and ABA used their money to develop security training programs that they made available free to hundreds of operators. The associations are expected to submit a joint application this year, seeking additional funding to continue and expand their industry-wide programs.

security, including wireless communications, global log-in by drivers or transportation workers via wireless systems, and biometrics, including fingerprint use to identify people.

Joseph DeLorenzo, an official with the FMCSA's Midwest Service Center, said the study would be completed this fall while attending a conference on security and technology here last month.

Road debris from vehicles causes crashes, deaths

WASHINGTON — A national traffic safety organization says vehicle-related road debris causes more than 25,000 crashes on North American roads each year.

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety also said that vehicle parts, cargo and other material unintentionally discharged from trucks, cars and other vehicles result in between 80 and 90 highway deaths annually.

“Although vehicle-related road debris crashes are generally less severe than other crashes, individual incidents can be catastrophic,” said Peter Kissinger, president of the foundation. “Moreover, many of the estimated 25,000 vehicle-related road debris crashes can be prevented if truckers and motorists secure their loads properly and report debris they encounter on the road.”

The report said the three most common types of road debris are tire treads, garbage from waste haulers and lumber and construction materials.

The foundation recommended enacting stricter laws on load securement and educating motorists on load securement as ways to reduce the number of accidents.

On the same day the report was

released last month, a tractor-trailer overturned on a curve on a highway near Bozeman, Mont., spilling a load of hundreds of bee hives and unleashing nine million angry honey bees.

The bees buzzed furiously as driver Lane Miller, his arm scraped to the bone, struggled to flee his rig after it overturned in Bear Trap Canyon west of Bozeman.

“I had to kick the windshield out

of the front of the cab and the bees were on me from that moment,” Miller told a wire service. “I’ve never felt so much fear in my life.”

Miller underwent surgery on his arm and suffered bruises and about

20 stings.

The state road was closed for 14 hours as crews and beekeepers cleaned up the 512 hives Miller was hauling from Idaho to North Dakota.

DaimlerChrysler Commercial Buses



Strength in Diversity.

All things aren't created equal. And for you that's a good thing. You have a diverse set of needs and want a company that offers a diverse line of products. That's why DaimlerChrysler Commercial Buses offers models in dozens of sizes and hundreds of configurations. We cover nearly every application from heavy-duty transit to short-run shuttle, and from day tours to luxury coach charters. And every bus is backed by the largest commercial vehicle maker in the world.

DAIMLERCHRYSLER
Commercial Buses North America



DaimlerChrysler Commercial Buses | 1.800.882.8054 | www.dcbusna.com

Oklahoma DOT warns of I-40 construction

OKLAHOMA CITY — The Oklahoma Department of Transportation is asking drivers to be super cautious in a construction zone between mile markers 135 and 124 on westbound Interstate 40.

Two significant accidents have occurred in the vicinity of the road work that is occurring between Oklahoma City and El Reno. Traffic is being slowed or stopped by the construction.

Oklahoma DOT says it has taken extra measures to catch the attention of all drivers in the construction zone, but it still needs help. Slow down, pay attention and watch for warning signs, says a ODOT official. Drivers are being asked to be especially careful when traveling in the area on weekends because of heavy traffic.

ODOT also is urging travelers to consider taking State Highway-66 or SH-152 as alternate routes when possible, and it is asking commercial operators to make their drivers aware of the hazard.

INDUSTRY NEWS

Buses and Bookstore Tourism: A heavenly marriage?

HARRISBURG, Pa. — It's not often the motorcoach industry sees the likes of Larry Portzline.

That's because Portzline is the leader of a one-man crusade that is trying to convince motorcoach tour and charter operators that they should embrace a travel concept he has developed called Bookstore Tourism.

To Portzline's way of thinking, Bookstore Tourism and the motorcoach industry is a marriage made in bus heaven.

In the past year, Portzline has led what he says were six sold-out motorcoach charter trips to independent book stores in distant cities. "We had three very successful bookstore adventures this spring — two to Greenwich Village and our first ever to Washington, D.C.," he reported the other day.

"The indie bookstores in the Georgetown and Dupont Circle neighborhoods (of Washington) are incredible, and I highly recommend them to anyone who's going to be paying a visit to the nation's capital anytime soon. The support I've received from the booksellers in these two locales has been wonderful."

Portzline, who teaches literature part time at Harrisburg Area Community College and writes full time for the Pennsylvania State

Senate, uses his spare time to organize busloads of bookworms to travel to independent bookstores. The trips usually include a dinner, allowing the book lovers to discuss their day of adventure before heading back home.

The goal of Portzline's single-minded zeal is not to drum up business for motorcoach operators — though it does that — but to do what he can to help save independ-



Driver Paul Frederick of Perkiomen Tours visits with trip participants on Fifth Avenue in Lower Manhattan prior to our drive across the Hudson River to dinner in Weehawken, N.J.

ent book stores, which may be disappearing faster than independent coach operators.

Independent booksellers face enormous competition from three sources: the giant book retailers,



A Bookstore Tourism group poses on the Hudson River waterfront outside Spirito Grill in the Sheraton Suites complex in Weehawken, N.J., with a view of midtown Manhattan at dusk in the background, including the Empire State Building.



Bookstore Tourism founder Larry Portzline offers a presentation on the bookselling industry during the drive to Washington, D.C.

like Barnes & Noble and Borders; the big discounters like Wal-Mart, and from the Internet and the likes of Amazon.com, E-Bay and a host of others.

Portzline, who has developed a Web site, *BookstoreTourism.com*, to help him push his avocation, got a major surprise (and boost) in May when *USA Today* selected his Web address as a "hot site."

He also is building partnerships with various organizations that are interested in adapting Bookstore Tourism to fit their specific needs, including libraries, coach companies, two book festivals on the East Coast, a large university, and "the fantastic booksellers in a small southern city who'd like to draw busloads of literary patrons into their community."

Portzline gets notes of encouragement from across the U.S. — even a few from other parts of the world. "Booksellers, educators, librarians, travel professionals and booklovers in general see a lot of potential for Bookstore Tourism, and they've been very generous in their enthusiasm, praise and well wishes," he says.

The prolific Portzline has even written a book, which he calls a manifesto, on why booklovers should support independent bookstores; what Bookstore Tourism is all about; who should participate; how to go about organizing a trip; how to research a city and its bookstores; how to plan other activities for the trip such as a presentation, meals, entertainment, author readings, tours and the like; how to create materials for the trip; how to publicize the trip; how to work with travel agents, bus companies, booksellers and restaurants, and what can go wrong.

The book can be downloaded from Portzline's Web site. He hopes to self-publish it in the fall in a paperback edition.

He calls the book: *Bookstore Tourism: The Book Addict's Guide to Planning & Promoting Bookstore Road Trips (for Bibliophiles & Other Bookshop Junkies)*.

"I really hope motorcoach operators will consider embracing Bookstore Tourism," says Portzline. "There is so much potential here. If you could see the folks who go on these trips with us, you'd know exactly what I am talking about. This is an untapped travel niche, and you really ought to take advantage of it."

RESTROOM COMPLAINTS? YOU'RE NOT USING ...



**CALL US TODAY TO FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN ENTIRELY ELIMINATE
SUMMER RESTROOM COMPLAINTS AND SAVE UP TO 50% OR MORE.**

UNIT CHEMICAL CORP (800) 879-8648 www.unitchemical.com

MCI is with you all the way.



It's no surprise that MCI sells more coaches than all other manufacturers combined. It begins with the models themselves. From our industry-leading J4500 and D4500 to our premier E4500 model, MCI works to bring you the operational features you need and the amenities that keep passengers coming back for more.

We're just as responsive once you take delivery. With a growing network of service centers and more coach parts than anyone, MCI Fleet Support anticipates your needs, right down to online warranty tracking, factory-trained technical support and Emergency Roadside Assistance. Call us today. See how MCI goes the extra mile for you.

Fleet Support Managers to count on

Experienced Technical Product Specialists

CoachEXPRESSSM Maintenance Programs

Over 8 million parts available

MCI Fleet Support

Parts • Service • Technical Support • Warranty • Product Assurance • Technician Training • Roadside Assistance

MCI Sales & Service Locations

| | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|---|
| West Los Alamitos, CA 800 777-4101 | Southwest Dallas, TX 800 248-4942 | Midwest Des Plaines, IL 800 743-3624 | Southeast Orlando, FL 800 390-0287 | East Blackwood, NJ 800 262-1287 | Canada Montreal, PQ 800 663-3328 |
|---|--|---|---|--|---|

or visit www.mcicoach.com for a complete listing of authorized MCI Service Centers.

© Motor Coach Industries, Inc. 2004, All Rights Reserved



MOTOR COACH
INDUSTRIES

We are America's coach.

OPINION

An open border

It's probably safe to say that few motorcoach operators did cartwheels to celebrate the U.S. Supreme Court decision last month, allowing the Bush Administration to push ahead and open U.S. highways to Mexican buses and trucks as soon as it wishes.

The fact is the U.S. motorcoach industry has never really warmed to the North American Free Trade Agreement that serves as the basis for opening bus and truck traffic between the United States and Mexico.

When NAFTA was being debated back in the early 1990s, the industry was united in the view that there was nothing in the proposed agreement that would enhance the business or the realistic business opportunities of American coach operators.

In fact, the industry told Congress in 1993 that there were provisions and inequities in the agreement that could harm the U.S. coach industry business environment. As usual, Congress didn't listen and NAFTA was ratified with complete open-door policies.

So, now that it looks like the NAFTA provisions governing cross-border bus and truck traffic will at last be implemented, will the entry of Mexican motorcoach companies hurt the precarious U.S. bus industry or will this be just a small blip on the competitive radar screen?

Operators in Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas will almost certainly see increased competition from Mexican carriers who can operate from their bases in the cheaper business environment across the border. While the cost of

meeting U.S. vehicle and driver safety regulations will be the same for those operators as it is for American companies, the cost of labor, real estate, repairs and other variables will unquestionably remain cheaper for Mexican operators.

Most likely, Mexican operators will be at their best in capturing customers in price-sensitive markets, in regular route service, and in offering cheap-fare charters within a day's drive of the border.

But because of support issues and existing limitations on the use of foreign labor, as those carriers travel further north and farther from their home base, the Mexican price advantage will wither. A Mexican carrier, for instance, that wants to do business in Chicago will pretty much be forced to pay the same prices for labor, taxes, services and incidentals as an American operator in Chicago.

Just as it has always been, the customer will make the ultimate decision about which companies win their business. Most American consumers will continue to patronize only American operators. Some may try the new guys. Sadly, price will continue to be the only competitive beacon for many customers unless concerns about Mexican carrier safety are proven to be more than a politically convenient anti-NAFTA rallying cry.

But that doesn't mean American operators can't compete. Safety, service and price, in that order, should continue to guide your operating principles. And reinforcing the axiom "you get what you pay for" should be a refrain your customers hear from you.

Mineta handicaps highway bill

HYATTSTOWN, Md. - Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta doubts Congress can finish work on a revamped highway and public transportation bill during its current session, suggesting he thinks it will probably end up delaying action until next year.

The current six-year roads and public transit law expired Sept. 30 and, despite a two-year head start, Congress has been unable to get a new highway reauthorization bill passed.

Since the current law expired, Congress has adopted three short-

term extensions. The latest extension expires June 30.

Congress is facing a series of deadlines and interruptions in the next several months that likely will hamper progress in getting the new legislation adopted. First is the July 4 recess. After that comes a five-week hiatus for the Republican and Democratic national conventions, then Labor Day, and finally the fall political campaigning.

Congress could adopt a 30-day or 90-day extension, with the latter giving the joint House-Senate

committee that is trying to assemble a final highway bill more breathing room.

However, Mineta believes the current law will probably end up being extended for a year. At the same time, he also thinks an extension would be bad for transportation and the economy.

"States and localities can't make plans when you have just one year of funding," Mineta said during an interview at Roadcheck 2004. "What contractor is going to bid when there's just one year's worth of funding?"

Tolls opposed on old interstates

WASHINGTON - A consortium of 65 highway-user organizations is urging Congress to reject the imposition of mandatory tolls on existing federal interstate highways.

Tolling interstates has gained considerable support among many cash-strapped states, in the Bush Administration, and among some members of Congress. The concept could become part of the highway and public transportation reauthorization bill that Congress is debating.

In a letter to members of the House-Senate Transportation Conference Committee, the consortium opposing the idea said the spread of tolls will erode the concept of an unrestricted interstate system, which for decades has been the nation's backbone for freight, recreational and commuter transportation needs.

"While we recognize the need for additional highway investment, we believe that tolling existing interstate highways is an inappropriate

mechanism with problematic and unacceptable side effects," the letter from the consortium said.

"For example, converting interstates to toll roads will force many motorists onto local roads, which are at least four times as dangerous as interstates. Tolls will also increase traffic congestion on these local roads, disrupt communities and result in unanticipated maintenance costs on arteries that were not designed to handle the type and volume of traffic that the diversion will cause."

The consortium is composed primarily of trucking organizations but includes the American Automobile Club, the American Highway Users Alliance, the American Farm Bureau, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association.

The letter also asserted that traffic shifting from interstate toll roads to secondary highways will have severe economic consequences, "not

only on the cost of travel but in related areas as well.

"For example, throughout the country significant investments have been made in roadside businesses, such as truck stops, hotels and motels, markets, restaurants and gas stations, and many others. Tolls, and the traffic diversion that comes with them, will negatively impact the ability of these companies to financially survive.

"Furthermore, these businesses are often the largest non-farm employers in rural communities, and their demise might also spell economic disaster for local populations."

The consortium also pointed out that 66 percent of the American public opposes imposing new tolls on existing interstates.

But while the group rejected mandatory tolls on existing interstate highways, it endorsed the concept of using tolls to help finance new interstate construction.

How to contact us:

To submit or report news, Letters to the Editor, articles:

E-mail: BusNews2003@aol.com

Fax: (877) 510-5598
or (877) 510-5602

Mail: 717 West Pierson #160
Phoenix, AZ 85013

Call: (602) 242-7361

To advertise or to mail advertising-related materials:

Call: Johnny Steger
(602) 980-0840

E-mail: Redboots44@aol.com

Mail: Post Office Box 12903
Tempe, AZ 85284

To complain:

Call: (602) 242-7361

E-mail: BusNews2003@aol.com

To contact the United Motorcoach Association:

Call: (800) 424-8262

or go to: www.uma.org

To e-mail advertisements or photographs:

E-mail: BMNews@jezac.com

or upload at www.jezac.com/uploads

To subscribe or inquire about your subscription:

Call: (602) 242-7361

To send subscription orders or changes of address:

E-mail: ebalm@qwest.net

Fax: (877) 510-5602

or (877) 510-5598

Mail: 717 West Pierson #160
Phoenix, AZ 85013

©2004 by the United Motorcoach Association. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited.

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

ISSUE NO. 33
A PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED MOTORCOACH ASSOCIATION

Staff

Editor & Publisher
Victor Parra

Sales Director
Johnny Steger

Government Editor
Norman Littler

Editorial Assistant
Tara Sheehan

Accountant
John Giddens

Senior Editor
Bruce Sankey

Art Director
Mary E. McCarty

Associate Editor
Ellen Balm

Editorial Assistant
Amy Stalknecht

Advisory Board

Alex Allen
Amador Stage Lines
Sacramento, Calif.

Bob Brisman
West Point Trailways
Vails Gate, N.Y.

David Brown
Holiday Tours
Randlemann, N.C.

Bob Foley
ABC Companies
Faribault, Minn.

Steve Haddad
Carl R. Bieber Tourways
Kutztown, Pa.

Rick Hillard
Tri-State Tours
Galena, Ill.

Todd Holland
Ramblin' Express
Colorado Springs

Robert Hume
Travel Mates Trailways
Harrisonburg, Va.

Daryl G. Johnson
J & J Charters
Crosby, Texas

Godfrey LeBron
Paradise Trailways
West Hempstead, N.Y.

Joan Libby
Cavalier Coach
Boston, Mass.

Warren Miller
Pacific Coach Bus Service
San Francisco, Calif.

Jeff Polzien
Red Carpet Tours
Oklahoma City

Robert L. Quick
Quick-Livick Inc.
Stauton, Va.

Tom Ready
Ready Bus Lines
LaCrescent, Minn.

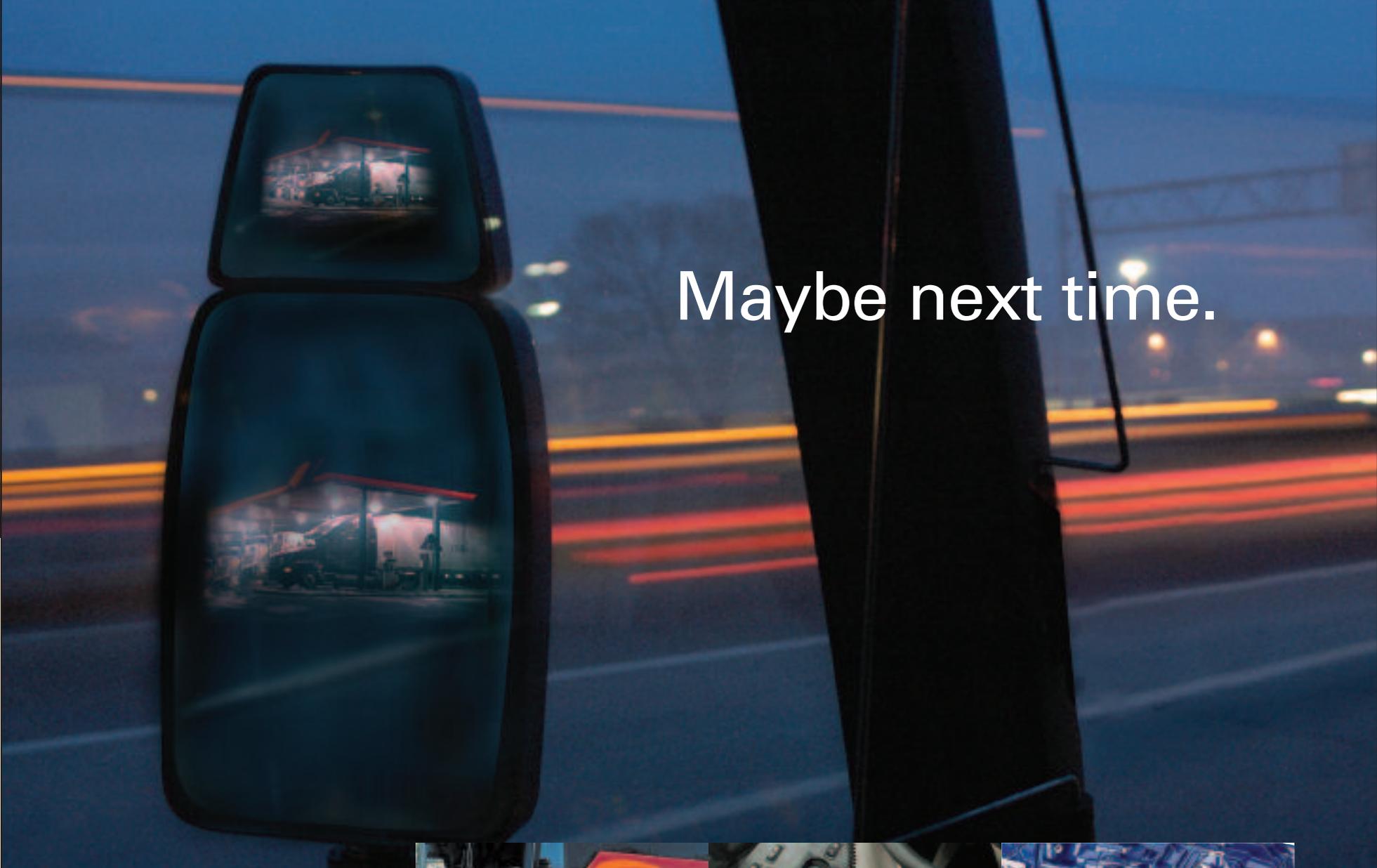
Bill Rohrbaugh
Bill Rohrbaugh's Charter Services
Manchester, Md.

Brian Scott
Escot Bus Lines
Largo, Fla.

John Silvanie
Suburban Charter Services
White Plains, N.Y.

Alan Spachman
National Interstate Insurance Co
Richfield, Ohio

T. Ralph Young
Young Transportation
Ashville, N.C.



Maybe next time.



- Increased fuel economy.
- 185,000 miles between oil changes; no paper filters.
- Automatic and manual shifting modes.
- Easy-to-use touch pad operation; no clutch pedal.
- High-torque capacity up to 1850 ft-lbs.

With more coach fleets choosing ZF-AS Tronic, this scene is starting to become pretty familiar with coach operators. Why? They just don't need to stop for fuel as often anymore. A coach equipped with a ZF-AS Tronic transmission can eliminate fuel stops – due to our gearbox design that results in better efficiency versus powershift transmissions.

With ZF-AS Tronic on board, real in-service data reveals an average fuel gain of 10% – a result supported by independently conducted testing, according to SAE standards. All of which translates to lower maintenance costs, greater operating efficiency, and keeping to on-time schedules. The ZF-AS Tronic is a smooth, quiet, lightweight, fuel-efficient, completely integrated transmission with the value-added benefits that fleet operators and drivers demand.

Specify ZF-AS Tronic...and put your coach to work for you.

ZF Industries, Inc.
Heavy-Duty On-Highway Group
Vernon Hills, IL
847.478.6868
E-Mail: onhwyinfo@zf.com

www.zf-group.com

Driveline and Chassis Technology



NEW PRODUCTS



Stabilizers avoid valve stem damage

A product to help prevent damage to valve stem extensions caused by the extensions rubbing against the wheels has been introduced by RealWheelsCover Co. of Gurnee, Ill. The Valve Stem Extension Stabilizer prevents extension wear that can lead to air leakage and eventual tire damage.

The stabilizer is said to be easy to install: Align the rubber stabilizer's center hole with the valve extension tip and push the stabilizer into the wheel hole until the stabilizer's front face is completely seated.

The RealWheels extension stabilizers are available in 2-, 2.5- or 2.8-inch sizes for Accuride and Alcoa aluminum wheels with round cut outs.

They can be purchased from dealers or directly from RealWheels. Call (800) 982-1180 or go to www.realwheels.com.

Distinctive Systems introduces software

Distinctive Systems Ltd. of Hamilton Square, N.J., a supplier of software to the motorcoach industry, has released a new Community Transport Industry subsystem to augment its charter and contract booking system, Coach Manager CBS.

Distinctive Systems says CBS is designed to handle any journey that repeats on either a regular or irregular basis. This functionality has been enhanced to allow a list of passengers to be associated with each journey.

The system stores comprehensive details about each passenger so special needs are easily recorded and can highlight the need for a fixed wheelchair position, personal attendant or other accommodation.

CBS also includes a new diary for community transport journeys. A data grid lists all the journeys for a selected day and as each journey is selected a separate grid lists all the passengers traveling on it. The grid can be used for quickly adding or removing passengers and for editing the order or time of pick-ups and set-downs.

To learn more, go to www.distinctive-systems.com, or call (866) PTC-INFO.

Sirius, XM have info

Sirius Satellite Radio Inc. has begun broadcasting local traffic information for Los Angeles, New York and 18 other top U.S. markets.

Rival XM Satellite Radio says it also has launched 21 channels of traffic information for the nation's largest markets.

Sirius Chief Executive Joe Clayton said the service is broadcasting on 10 channels, with each channel serving two markets.



Cat offers C-13 engine

Caterpillar has a new model engine for the over-the-road bus industry, the C13, which utilizes the company's ACERT system.

ACERT, short for advanced combustion emission reduction technology, combines several systems – fuel, air, electronics and exhaust after-treatment – to reduce emissions. ACERT employs algorithms to identify optimal settings for the lowest possible nitrogen oxide emissions. The system also recovers exhaust

energy, improving fuel economy and further reducing emissions.

Caterpillar says ACERT provides reliability and durability equal to or better than previous engines, and fuel economy that is equal to 2001 products "with proper specification" and "3 to 5 percent better than current competing technologies."

The C13 is available in 335- to 430-horsepower ranges.

For more information, go to www.caterpillar.com.

SUBSCRIBE

- Yes.** Start my one-year subscription (24 issues) to Bus & Motorcoach NEWS for \$49* (only \$2 per issue).
- Save even more, 2 years for \$79.
- I'm a member of UMA, but I want a additional subscription for \$39 (each).
- Bill me.**
- Charge my credit card.**
- My check is enclosed.**

* Rate outside U.S. is \$59 (U.S.) per year

** Photo copy this ad, complete it, and fax or mail to Bus & Motorcoach News.

NAME _____

TITLE _____

COMPANY _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ FAX _____

E-MAIL _____

CREDIT CARD NO. _____

_____ VISA _____ MASTERCARD _____ AMERICAN EXPRESS

EXPIRATION DATE _____

Satisfaction is Guaranteed

Our promise: If you are not satisfied with Bus & Motorcoach NEWS, we will send you a full refund on all unmailed copies. You may cancel at any time, for any reason.

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

717 W. Pierson St., Phoenix, AZ 85013

Fax toll-free to: (877) 510-5602; if busy, (877) 510-5598

Questions: busnews2003@aol.com . . . or call (602) 242-7361.

Shuttle Bus Leasing

"Your Solution For Shuttling & Fixed Route Contracting"



*Leases Terms Available
From 3 Months to 2 Years
High Quality, Transit
Shuttle Buses
22' To 60' Models Available
Over 1000 Buses In Inventory*

*Parking Lot Shuttles
Seasonal Coverage
Peak Demand Coverage
Employee Shuttling To
and From Job Sites*



Top Quality Transit Buses Also Available for Sale



800-287-7253

1863 Service Court, Riverside, CA 92507
www.ShuttleBusLeasing.com

Stertil-Koni introduces parts washer, three lifts

Stertil-Koni, which specializes in supplying a wide variety of lifts intended for use in maintenance shops, has introduced a handful of products that expand its line of heavy-duty four-post drive-on lifts, mobile lifts, automotive lifts and in-ground high-pressure hydraulic lifts.

The latest Stertil-Koni entry is a new-generation mobile lift with an 18,000-pound per column capacity. The lift features large adjustable forks to accommodate different vehicles and grab more tire, retractable wheels for improved stabilization, and reduced floor pressure requirements.

Also new from Stertil-Koni is a high-performance, heavy-duty transmission jack designed for large trans-

missions. It has a capacity of 3,500 pounds, a maximum height of 74 inches, a tilt table with up to 12 degrees front-to-back or side-to-side movement.

A new non-lift product from Stertil-Koni is a water-based parts washer. The environmentally friendly washer is designed for efficiency.

Capable of handling oversized parts, the washer has a 63-gallon tank, a 42-inch basket diameter, a 600-pound load limit, and a clam-shell design for easy loading.

The last new Stertil-Koni product is an advanced two-post lift with a rated capacity of 16,000 pounds.

For more information, go to www.stertil-koni.com.



New tool for cleaning interiors

Willingham Inc., the custom seat cover and bus interior refurbishing company, has introduced a cleaning machine that is usable on all wet-cleanable fabrics, including upholstery, carpeting and ceilings.

The XLT-60 has a compact, lightweight body that allows on-site or in-bus cleaning of seats and

other fabrics. It provides instantly heated water to 212 degrees, electronic auto-vac shut off, four-gallon holding tank, high-tech accessories and lift-out recovery bucket.

It has a one-year warranty and a complete line of chemicals.

For information, call (425) 417-0544.

Fast idle system is now available

A fast-idle system for small and midsize buses built on the Ford E350 and E450 chassis has been introduced by InterMotive Products of Auburn, Calif.

For information, call (530) 823-2332 or go to www.intermotive.net.

New PennTex alternator for motorcoaches, buses

PennTex Industries of Manchester, Pa., has introduced the PX-833 air-cooled alternator. The 24-amp alternator is rated at 330 amps.

Designed as an upgrade and replacement for the industry standard 50DN alternator, the PennTex PX-833 has specially designed bearings with high-temperature seals and grease. It utilizes all existing hardware, electrical connections and pulley for ease of installation. It is easily serviced with standard components.

PennTex says that converting to the PX-833 is easy and eliminates oil leaks. The company also says engine



fuel economy and performance will improve because of decreased torque and horsepower drag. The alternator has a warranty for 12 months, or 150,000 miles, whichever is first.

For more information, call (877) 590-0505, or go to www.penntexusa.com.

RECARO adds driver seats

RECARO North America of Auburn Hills, Mich., has introduced two driver seats for commercial buses. The company says the ergo M and the ergo S models offer the ultimate in design and materials.

The seats have extra high backrests with ergonomically formed cushions for support of back and shoulders, and a lumbar support for spinal support. The seat-cushion

extension and seat cushion-tilt adjustment offer tight support and relieve muscle tension.

The ergo S model is designed for the over-the-road coach and medium-duty bus segments, while the ergo M model was developed for transit and over-the-road coach markets.

For more information call (248) 340-5990, or go to www.recaro-nao.com.

RBS, Inc.
Relational Bus Systems

**New Ideas
New Directions
New Products**

GoChart 2000
Best Selling Charter Management System in North America

GoTour Online - (GTO)
Browser Based Tour Reservation System

Driver Time 3000
Integrated Time Management for Payroll

Gomile 3000
Integrated IFTA compatible Fuel Tax Reporting System

Call For Free Evaluation
1-800-448-7001 - WWW.RBS2000.COM

**Pre-owned
Dina Viaggio's!**

20 1995, 1996, 1997 & 1998's
Series 60's, B500's

Priced from \$49,500 to 69,900

*Financing available to qualified buyers!

- Fleet maintained and serviced
- All Wheelchair Equipped
- Some with Video

Call 800-322-2877
Ask for Charlie, Clint, Mark or Roman!

ABC
COMPANIES

View our on-line inventory at
www.abc-companies.com

INDUSTRY NEWS

Henleys

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"Initial discussions with the lending banks have been constructive and the board anticipates this will lead to a positive outcome," the company added.

Announcements shock

Henlys' revelation last month that its shares have "little or no value" and would be delisted shocked the British financial markets and press. Although the company's problems were no secret, there apparently had been lingering hope on the part of some investors that things might turnaround.

Such thinking disappeared in a heart beat after the June news hit. Henlys shares, valued at around \$2 (U.S.) at the beginning of February, fell to about 2 cents after the company said any restructuring would dilute shareholders' interest to virtu-

ally nothing.

Henlys' string of sobering statements included two announcements reporting that its board had replaced top management with executives experienced in corporate turnarounds, including David James, a 66-year-old executive who has spent most of the past 15 years shuffling from one corporate basket case to the next.

James was appointed chairman, while Timothy Redburn was named executive director. In announcing the hiring of Redburn, Henlys made a point to note he had "extensive corporate restructuring and turnaround experience" gained at four public companies.

The past 33 months have largely been a disaster for Henlys. The extended economic slump in the U.S., including severe cutbacks in bus purchases by school districts and municipalities; the aftermath of 9/11; the SARS outbreak in Canada;

the collapse of a joint-venture British bus manufacturing company that was 30 percent owned by Henlys, and a whole range of problems at Blue Bird sent Henlys into a financial freefall.

Lots of red flags

The company's annual reports for recent years recount and reveal a deteriorating financial position. Or, in the words of one British financial journalist: "There were enough red flags to festoon a Communist Party conference."

Earnings and sales have been sliding since 2000; its ability to cover interest costs have become razor thin; it incurred "exceptional" charges year after year, and a loss was retained in each of the past three years.

On the company balance sheet, Henlys' tangible assets were dwarfed by intangible goodwill. Even with the intangibles, the company's net assets had dropped to \$267 million

by last September 30, when its net debt was \$521.5 million.

Meanwhile, Henlys had to write off its \$130 million investment in TransBus, the United Kingdom's leading bus builder, which was 30 percent owned by Henlys and 70 percent owned by The Mayflower Corporation PLC.

Mayflower went belly up at the end of March, and its administrators put the company, its businesses, its assets and certain of its subsidiaries on the block. TransBus owned three major British bus brands - body builders Alexander and Plaxton and chassis manufacturer Dennis.

In mid-May, management of Plaxton purchased that operation for \$27 million. About a week later, a Scottish consortium purchased what was left of TransBus for \$160 million.

The investment group that acquired TransBus is headed by Noble Grossart and includes the founder and largest shareholder of Stagecoach Group, Brian Souter.

In announcing the TransBus deal, the administrators of Mayflower said the purchase will secure the future of the company, which produced upwards of 1,400 single- and double-decker buses a year at plants in Scotland.

Contributing to the Mayflower collapse was the discovery of "certain accounting irregularities" in the TransBus division, suggesting that accounting shenanigans aren't confined to American corporations.

The accounting high jinks were expected to increase debt at Mayflower by \$35 million.

Lending an invasion

Both Henlys and Mayflower were key players in the so-called British invasion of the North American bus industry in the late 1990s. The invasion also included

such U.K. companies as FirstGroup, National Express and Stagecoach Group, which bought Coach USA. Henlys led the invasion in 1995, jointly purchasing Prevost Car with Volvo Bus.

Not much happened until 1998-99 when a near feeding frenzy by British companies gobbled up large chunks of the U.S. bus industry.

In 1998, Mayflower bought 40 percent of Metrotrans, the second-largest midsize bus maker in the U.S., which took the British company's money and promptly went out of business.

More successful was a joint venture Mayflower arranged with Thomas Built Buses to produce a 30-foot low-floor bus - the SLF - based on a Dennis Dart chassis and Alexander body. That arrangement ended a year ago with Thomas Dennis LLC becoming DaimlerChrysler Commercial Buses North Carolina.

Among the many British-U.S. deals in 1999 was Henlys' purchase of Blue Bird Corp. for \$665 million, including assuming \$237 million in debt.

Blue Bird, as it turned out, proved to be an Excedrin headache for Henlys. Major production problems during the past two years in the school bus operation, a costly revamping of its product line, and a slowdown in the commercial and transit divisions defied quick resolution. Blue Bird lost about \$64 million in the 12 months ended Sept. 30, 2003.

New management at Blue Bird, lead by President and CEO Jeffrey Bust, has largely stabilized the company, but slow sales and reduced margins continue to restrain results.

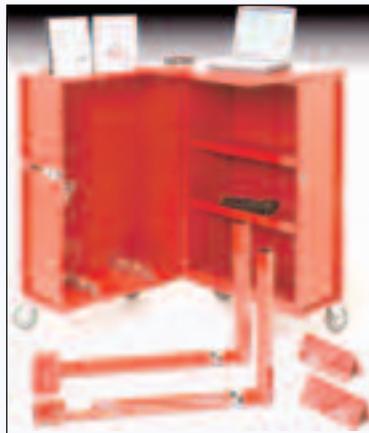
Prevost, meanwhile, experienced a slow down but remained profitable. It earned more than \$17 million on sales of nearly \$270 million in fiscal 2003.

Protrak QCT Laser Wheel Alignment System

For Trucks And Trailers

The protrak QCT is designed with maximum speed and versatility in mind. Able to easily align every vehicle in your fleet with proven accuracy, the protrak QCT will be the most valuable tool in your shop!

- Improve Tire Wear and Handling
- Increase Profits
- Increase Alignment Accuracy
- 10 Minute Alignment Check On Any Truck



Protrak QCT For quality complete alignment of Trucks, Trailers and Coaches of virtually all shapes and sizes.

protrak QCT

1-800-617-5592 • www.mdalign.com • mdalign@aol.com

Find a Great Job in Bus Marketing

Casino Careers Online offers a world of opportunities with over 200 Casino-Hotel Resorts!

:: Post Your Resume for FREE

:: Apply Online Directly to Employers

www.CasinoCareers.com

Careers in Motorcoach Marketing and Transportation

DriveCam reports growth, surpasses 10,000 units

SAN DIEGO - DriveCam Video Systems says that strong demand for its fleet safety technology that improves driving behavior has produced a 120 percent increase in revenue for the first quarter of this year over the same period last year.

As a result of the growth, DriveCam says it is adding new staff in safety services, sales, engineering, product management, customer service and administration while increasing its facilities.

"We are investing in the infrastructure of the company to support our existing customers, as well as develop new and improved products and services they will require in the future," said Ed Andrew, president of DriveCam. "Our invest-

ment in service and support is focused on helping our customers quickly maximize the economic and safety benefits of the DriveCam program they have purchased."

DriveCam's Driving Feedback System is used to reduce collisions and lowering operating expenses. It records driving incidents via a video system from the vehicle. The recordings can be used to counsel drivers about their specific driving habits. Additionally, recordings of driving events can provide proof in the case of an accident, prevent fraudulent claims, capture contributory negligence and create real-life training scenarios.

As of May, more than 10,000 vehicles have been outfitted with DriveCam.



New at MCI's Winnipeg assembly plant is a Coach Delivery Center.

MCI refinances

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"Product quality and customer satisfaction measures have improved in each of the last three years," Frank said. "As the market leader, we believe this refinancing will position the company to take advantage of the upturn in the motorcoach purchasing cycle with extended maturities and the additional liquidity provided."

Thomas Sorrells, president and chief executive of MCI, added: "We continue to value JLL's

unwavering support of MCI, especially through this refinancing and debt reduction. The actions taken by the company during low periods are already producing benefits as we begin to see a revival in our business.

"This refinancing ensures that our financial position remains strong and eliminates speculation about our company's financial position. What sets MCI apart from other manufacturers is the unwavering commitment and experience of our people. Our quality and the value we deliver speak for themselves."

JLL (formerly Joseph Littlejohn & Levy) acquired control of MCI in June 1999, as part of a restructuring of the company's previous owner, Grupo Dina of Mexico. At the time, Dina was on the verge of financial collapse.

During the past five years, MCI's manufacturing operations have been completely revamped, reducing costs, improving plant efficiency and upgrading quality.

JLL expects to eventually sell MCI once its operational improvement program is complete, making MCI a more attractive acquisition target.

National Motorcoach Network, Trailways partner for event

FAIRFAX STATION, Va. — The National Motorcoach Network has gained a major new partner for its Invitational 100 meeting later this month.

The Charter and Tour Division of Trailways Transportation System has signed on to support the annual event, which will be July 22-25 at the Radisson Hotel Annapolis in Annapolis, Md.

The partnership with Trailways opens up the meeting to the 100 motorcoach charter and tour companies that comprise the combined organizations. With the change, the sponsoring organizations anticipate they could double the number of motorcoach charter and tour companies participating in the meeting.

The event is organized as a networking opportunity for motorcoach charter and tour operators, and travel industry and associate suppliers.

The Invitational 100, which is now in its 21st year, traditionally has been one of the best supported meetings in the travel industry, according to National Motorcoach Network

President Steve Kirchner.

There will be similar support this year from the Annapolis tourism community, through the Annapolis & Anne Arundel County Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Maryland Office of Tourism Development, which are planning an outstanding series of events open to all meeting registrants.

"This event is very successful and productive. And Trailways is honored to be a partner of this year's meeting," said Trailways President Gale Ellsworth. "We look forward to a long-term relationship that will benefit the members of both organizations."

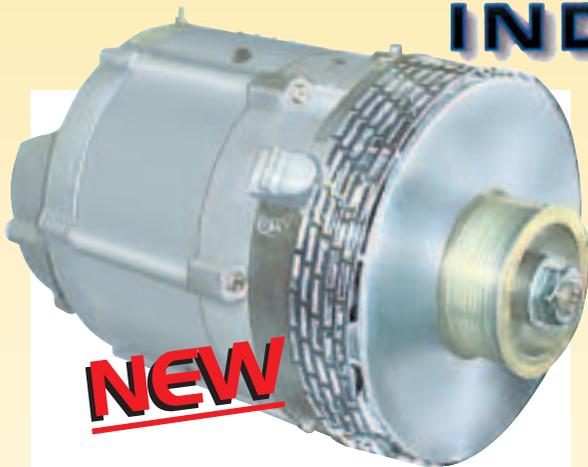
The Invitational is limited to a maximum of 100 supplier registrants, but there is no limit to the number of motorcoach charter and tour operators who can participate.

For additional information, including registration information, contact the National Motorcoach Network at (888) 733-5287, or Trailways at (703) 691-3052, or e-mail nmn@motorcoach.com

Get The

PennTex
INDUSTRIES, INC.

**HIGH EFFICIENCY
ALTERNATORS
AND MOBILE
ELECTRONIC
DEVICES**



NEW

PennTex introduces an efficient air-cooled solution to an old problem... oil leaks and premature failures. The PX-833 also eliminates the possibility of engine oil contamination. Contact us today for immediate answers to your questions.

PX-833 Advantage!

- ✓ **330A/24V, more than 200 amps at idle.**
- ✓ **High temperature bearing grease and seals.**
- ✓ **Increased fuel economy due to air-cooled efficient design.**
- ✓ **Utilizes all existing hardware, electrical components, and pulleys.**
- ✓ **Oil-to-Air conversion program available.**

Complete Equipment and Parts Catalog Available.
Can be downloaded from our expanded Web Site:
penntexusa.com

PennTex products are proudly manufactured
in FORT WORTH, TEXAS, USA.

PennTex
INDUSTRIES, INC.

PennTex Industries, Inc.
202 Plaza Dr.
Manchester, PA 17345

Sales and Technical Toll Free: 877-590-7366
Sales Fax: 817-590-0505

E-MAIL: penntex@swbell.net

INDUSTRY NEWS

Best boosts rating of National Interstate Insurance

OLDWICK, N.J. — The nation's largest and longest-established company devoted to issuing in-depth reports and financial-strength ratings about insurance organizations has boosted its rating of National Interstate Insurance Co.

A.M. Best Company, the most

widely recognized insurance industry rating agency, said it has upgraded the financial strength rating of National Interstate Insurance from A- (Excellent) to A (Excellent).

National Interstate is one of the motorcoach industry's leading insurance companies.

Best's ratings reflect its opinion based on a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative evaluation of a company's balance sheet strength, operating performance and business profile.

For "secure" companies, six ratings are possible: "A++," "A+," "A," "A-," "B++" and

"B+." The company has another 10 ratings for "vulnerable" companies, ranging from "B" to "S" (suspended).

National Interstate, which is based in the Cleveland suburb of Richfield, Ohio, was founded 15 years ago to serve the insurance needs of the passenger transpor-

tation industry.

Today, the company also serves the truck, recreation vehicle and Hawaii commercial business insurance markets.

"We're pleased A.M. Best affirmed its confidence in NIIC," said company Assistant Vice President Michelle Silverstro.

Here's what the Big Fat Bus Book delivers...

- Profiles of more than 6,000
 - Private bus companies
 - Transit agencies and systems
 - Manufacturers and suppliers
 - Bus industry associations
 - Consultants
- An A-Z telephone directory with the names, locations and telephone numbers of thousands of people, businesses, organizations and associations that compose the North American bus industry
- Yellow Pages guide to bus industry products and services
- Sections organized to reflect the different segments of the bus industry
- Accurately alphabetized for easy use
- U.S. and Canada — all states, provinces and territories

Forget about what's gone before:

The Bus Pages.
The Bus Industry Directory.

Those were just an appetizer. **The Big Fat Bus Book** is the whole enchilada.

The Big Fat Bus Book on CD

- Gives you access to a wealth of information and data on your PC or laptop
- Contains all the same information that's in the printed Big Fat Bus Book
- Allows you to quickly locate just the information you need
- Is as easy to use as the printed Big Fat Bus Book

Order today!

Only \$79

for *The Big Fat Bus Book on CD**

Only \$99

for *The Big Fat Bus Book (print version)**

Ordering is quick and easy when you use your VISA, MasterCard or American Express

* In Canada and elsewhere outside the U.S., price is \$89 (U.S. funds) for The Big Fat Bus Book on CD and \$119 for the printed Big Fat Bus Book. All prices include shipping and handling.

For fastest service, fax the form below toll-free to:
(877) 510-5598 or (877) 510-5602

The Big Fat Bus Book

is produced by the Bus Publications Group
717 W. Pierson, #160
Phoenix, AZ 85013
(602) 242-7361

New York Takeover

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

maintaining that the MTA could provide better service than what the private companies have been offering, especially over the past few years. "We believe the MTA can manage these lines more efficiently than they have been previously, so we expect better value for the taxpayers and better service for the riders," said Baowitz.

The private carriers have been operating the routes since 1974 under a series of renewable contracts with the city and city subsidies that most recently totaled \$150 million a year. They serviced the routes with 1,250 aged and rundown city-owned buses, which had been a sore spot with the carriers who frequently complained that the city did not provide enough money to maintain the buses and would not replace them with newer models.

Baowitz acknowledged that most of the city-owned buses used

by the private carriers are in terrible shape, noting the city has ordered 450 new ones as part of an effort to update the entire fleet.

The MTA, when it takes over, plans to immediately remove the worst buses from the routes and replace them with buses now in the

"You really won't see very much difference for about six months,"

authority fleet, according to Kelly. He said other changes on the routes, including the possible merging of some routes, would take place gradually. "You really won't see very much difference for about six months," he said.

Once the takeover is completed, some of the seven companies could go out of business.

Command Bus Co., Green Bus Lines, Jamaica Buses and Triboro Coach Corp., all affiliates of Green Bus Lines Inc., as well as Queens Surface, have no other operations other than the transit routes.

New York Bus Service and Liberty Lines have other business, including school bus routes and line operations in other communities.

Safety Briefing

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

through a joint government-industry outreach program.

Specifically, the FMCSA, in partnership with the insurance industry, would implement a program to develop informational pamphlets and downloadable electronic files that explain when and how to use emergency exists.

These safety materials would be provided to motorcoach operators for distribution to their customers and passengers. The motorcoach companies would have the flexibility to conduct pretrip safety brief-

ings that are tailored to their own overall safety and operational procedures.

In addition, FMCSA would strongly encourage Greyhound to establish a company policy for its drivers or other personnel to conduct motorcoach safety briefings at major stops.

In her memo to the NTSB, Sandberg said the FMCSA believes its proposed outreach effort will "garner significant near-term voluntary participation without the need for a regulatory requirement."

She asked the NTSB to endorse the idea and reclassify its recommendations as "closed."

MOTORCOACH DIRECTORY

The Guide to the North American Bus Industry

Yes. I want to subscribe to the 2004 Motorcoach Directory on CD for only \$79 (includes S&H).*

Yes. I want to subscribe to the 2004 Motorcoach Directory printed version for only \$99 (includes S&H).**

Yes. I want both, a printed book and a book on CD for the special combo price of \$150 (includes S&H).***

Charge my credit card***
My check is enclosed***

* Rate outside U.S. is \$89 (U.S.)
** Rate outside U.S. is \$119 (U.S.)
*** Send card in business-size envelope.
**** Rate outside U.S. \$175 (U.S.)
Make check payable to Bus Publications Group.

Name _____
Title _____
Company _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Fax _____
E-mail _____
Credit Card No. _____
 Visa MasterCard AmericanExpress
Expiration Date _____

Send this card to:
The Big Fat Bus Book
%The Bus Publications Group
717 W. Pierson, #160
Phoenix, AZ 85013

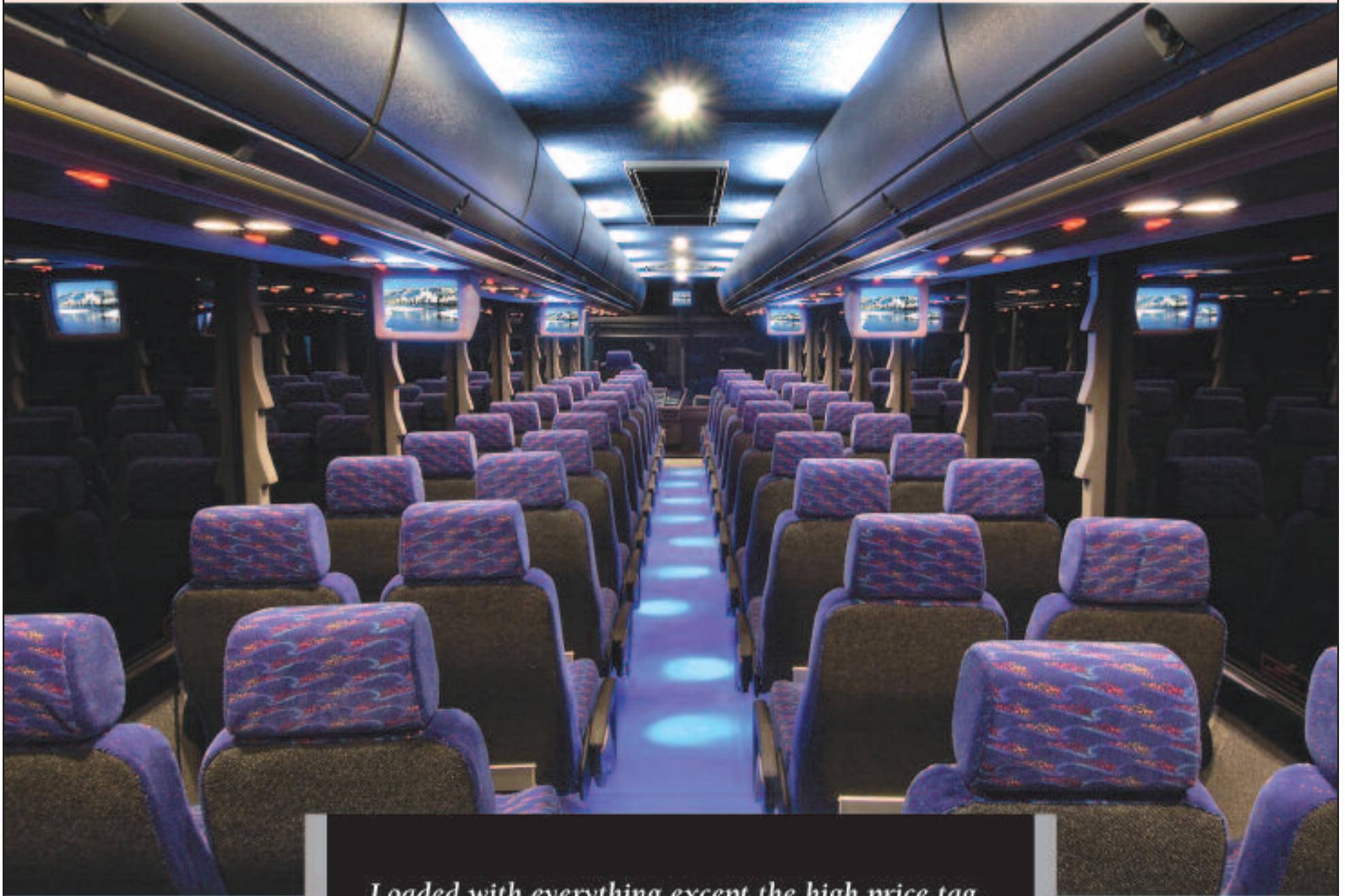
For faster service
Fax Order to (877) 510-5598
or (877) 510-5602

FOR SALE: 1996 MCI DL3

60, NEW Allison B500R Auto Trans (under warr.), 55 pass, Alum Wheels & Tires, Loaded.
\$139,000

Call David
1-888-382-8737 ext. 200
email for pictures
david@davidtours.net

EXPRESS



Loaded with everything except the high price tag.

With a significantly lower price point than competitive coaches, the all new Express multipurpose coach has been engineered from the ground up to deliver exceptional performance and value in the commuter coach and shuttle markets. The Express doesn't compromise on quality either. Available in two lengths—40 and 45 feet—this American made coach is loaded with the very latest performance and safety features demanded by North American operators.

With seating for up to 55 passengers, the Express is 12-year Altoona designed and possesses the versatility to handle



virtually any application and environment. An all stainless steel construction guarantees structural integrity. The independent front suspension system delivers improved maneuverability. The ergonomic driver area is designed for convenience. And the panoramic insulated windows and wide passenger seats ensure rider comfort.

When you consider the cost savings, durability, comfort, driveability and overall value of the Express, you'll realize this is one coach you can't afford to pass up.

*To learn more about the Express contact
Blue Bird Coachworks at 1-800-486-7122.*

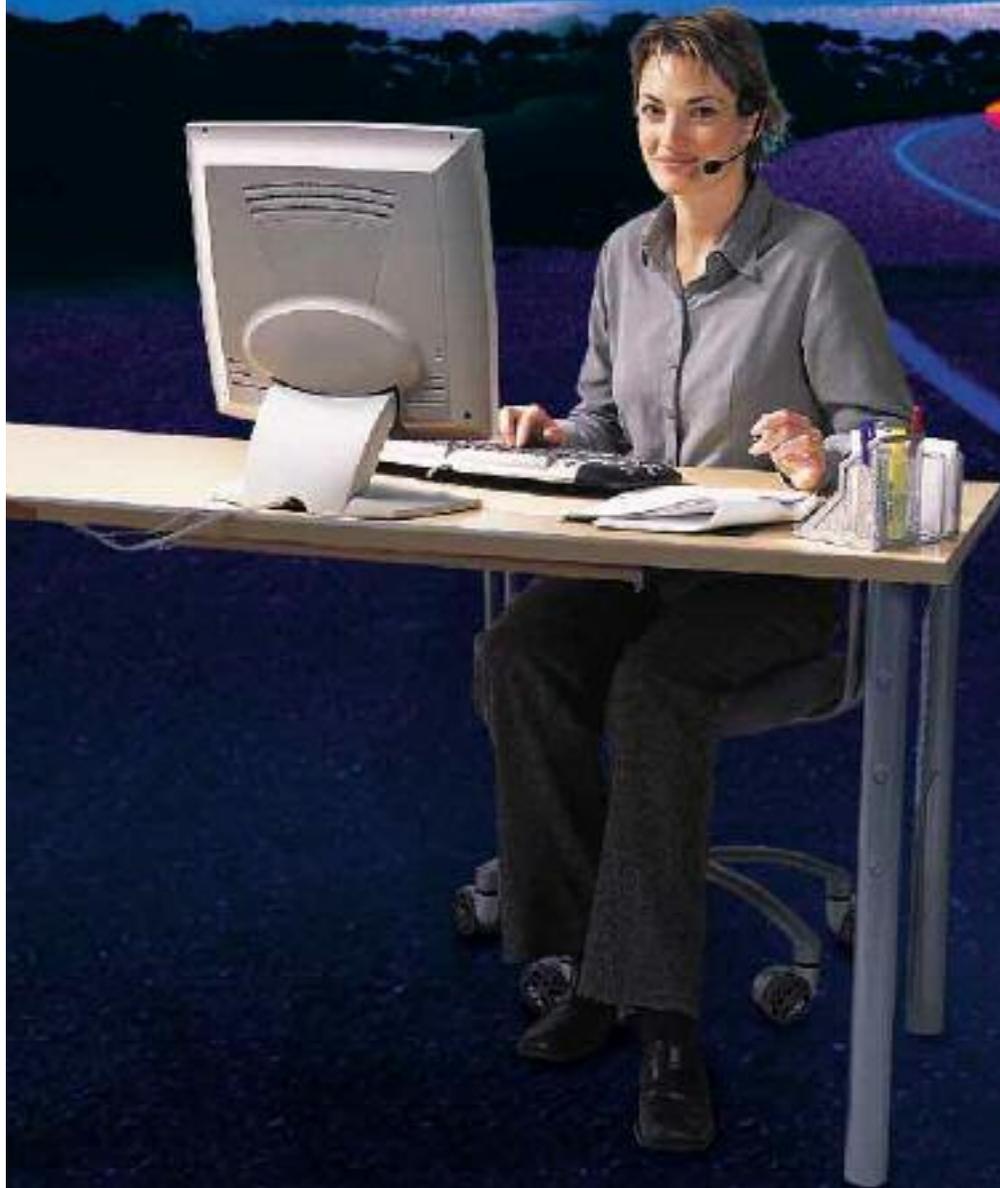
www.blue-bird.com

Blue Bird Corporation, Coachworks Division, One Wanderidge Way, Fort Valley, GA 31030

BLUE BIRD
Coachworks®

Here. There. Everywhere.

Presence. That's what we're all about. Backed by the most efficient network in the industry along with a dedicated and experienced team, we're behind you all the way. Wherever you are, PrevoSt Parts is always there - a reassuring presence 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



CANADA
QUEBEC • 800-463-8876

UNITED STATES
ILLINOIS • 877-999-8808
NEW JERSEY • 800-223-0830
FLORIDA • 800-874-7740
TENNESSEE • 877-299-8881
TEXAS • 866-773-8678
CALIFORNIA • 800-421-9958

▶ Easy to find. Easy to order. www.prevostparts.com