

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

Coach operators council sets ambitious new goals

DENVER — The upstart Green Operators Motor Coach Council is going after bigger things.

Formed less than a year ago, the organization that planned to promote the industry nationally by emphasizing the “green” aspects of motorcoach travel — “Go Coach, Go Green” — has recreated itself and is developing plans for a broader promotional campaign.

Renamed the Motorcoach Council, it now is looking for a public relations firm to develop a professional marketing package that will help educate the traveling public in the United States and Canada about all facets of the industry.

“The council now feels it is more appropriate and opportunistic for us to communicate a broader

marketing message,” said council spokeswoman Heather O. Horton. “Our green qualities will now be just one important facet of a more thorough marketing awareness campaign for the motorcoach industry.”

The grassroots effort will not only push motorcoach travel as an environmentally responsible service but it also will highlight many

other benefits, including comfort, availability, usage and selection.

“The green aspect of the industry is a very strong marketing point that won’t go away,” said Todd Holland of Ramblin Express in Colorado Springs and the council president and chairman. “But there are many more areas we need to be telling the public about as well, and we did not want to limit our

efforts.”

Although the marketing program will not be developed until after the public relations firm is hired, it likely will cover a range of promotional efforts, possibly including bus wraps, media advertisements, weekly newsletters, monthly publications and a Website.

“We are going to leave that to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10 ►

Stopping bus theft

Electronic deterrents growing in popularity

A GPS tracking system that also can help thwart bus thefts and deter terrorist hijackings is gaining in popularity in the motorcoach industry.

More than 100 over-the-road and tour-and-charter bus companies, with fleets ranging from a single bus to several hundred, have installed Saucon TDS devices on their coaches.

And sales this year could double as many more operators move to not only have sophisticated tracking systems onboard their coaches but try to prevent them from being stolen by miscreants or hijacked by terrorists and turned into deadly weapons.

Manufactured by Saucon Technologies of Bethlehem, Pa., the GPS

devices allow operators to remotely slowdown and stop a bus and shut down the engine so it cannot be restarted.

The company has sold about 1,000 of them a year since they were introduced to the motorcoach industry about three years ago. Sales this year, however, are on track to top 2,000, which would result in more than 5,000 being on the road in the United States, according to Saucon managing director Bill Bouffar.

The growing customer list includes biggies such as Coach USA, which has the units on about 1,500 of its buses on the East Coast and its Gray Line affiliate, which uses them on some of its double-decker tourist buses.

“We were interested in getting GPS systems on our coaches and these ones have all of the bells and whistles so we decided to go with their devices,” said Gary Pard, vice president of DeCamp Bus Lines, a commuter service in Montclair, N.J., that plans to equip all 80 of its coaches with the system.

DeCamp was just approved for a \$136,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security that will be used to buy and install the units.

Most of the companies buying the devices have used federal security grants to purchase them, according to Bouffar. They cost about \$1,500 each and require a monthly service fee of about \$50,

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Cat leaving coach market, impact will be significant

PEORIA, Ill. — Caterpillar Inc. delivered a body blow to the North American motorcoach industry last month when it announced it was bailing out of the on-highway truck and bus engine market.

Since Caterpillar re-entered the bus industry early in this decade it had become a strong competitor to Detroit Diesel and Cummins as an engine supplier, and it helped push its engines by becoming an important financier of new coach purchases.

That all will come to an end as Caterpillar exits the on-highway bus and truck engine market by 2010, opting instead to work with Navistar International Corp. to develop off-road trucks.

The Cat announcement, which was hardly a surprise (see June 15

Bus & Motorcoach News), was nonetheless startling.

Leaving the on-highway commercial vehicle market is a major break with Cat’s historic strategy but, at the same time, it confirms speculation that it might sell, dispose of, or shut down its truck-and-bus engine business because it represents only 6 percent of its total engine sales.

Keeping it would have required significant investment by Cat to comply with tough Environmental Protection Agency emission rules that go in affect in 2010.

“This is a way to exit the business and focus on more profitable areas like mining machinery,” said one financial analyst.

The impact on the motorcoach

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8 ►

Coach builders offer tips for operators to save fuel

Motor Coach Industries and ABC Companies/Van Hool have launched promotional programs that provide motorcoach operators with tips for saving fuel.

ABC is distributing a flyer that asks the pregnant question: “Are fuel costs eating into your profits?” And MCI is providing fuel and money saving recommendations via its electronic newsletter, *FYI*.

Both lists are concise and well thought out, containing common sense recommendations and points operators may have overlooked as they search for ways to reduce fuel usage.

While ABC’s list is longer, MCI has come up with figures showing estimated cost savings for various recommendations. The MCI calculations are based on \$5

a gallon diesel fuel. Ugh!

No. 1 on both lists is keeping tires properly inflated. ABC recommends checking cold tire pressure daily, noting that fuel economy decreases by 1 percent for every 10 pounds per square inch of under inflation. MCI parts engineers estimate that using the SmarTire tire pressure monitoring system to keep tires properly

inflated can increase fuel economy by 3 percent. Potential cost savings: up to 15 cents a gallon.

Both companies also recommend inspecting and replacing the air filter — as necessary. ABC points out that engines that can’t breathe properly burn excess fuel and work harder to expel exhaust. A clean air filter can improve fuel mileage by as much as 10 percent,

says MCI. Cost savings: up to 50 cents a gallon.

Efficient driving. ABC points out that the most efficient drivers can achieve 30 percent greater fuel economy than the least efficient drivers. Above 55 miles per hour, each one mile per hour increase in speed can decrease fuel economy by 0.1 mpg.

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Private bus operators 'thank' Metro for halting charters

WASHINGTON — Six trade associations representing private bus operators have sent a letter to the general manager of the District of Columbia public transit agency, commending him for saying his agency will no longer provide charter bus service.

The associations, which call themselves the Coalition of Private Passenger Transportation Organizations, sent the letter after Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority General Man-

ager John Catoe told his board that the new federal charter bus rule "quite effectively takes Metro out of the business of providing charter bus service."

In its letter, the coalition reminded Catoe that federal regulations have always prohibited Washington Metro from providing charter bus service but the new rule represented "greater clarity, transparency, accountability, consistency and fairness on an issue that has been fraught with confu-

sion, secrecy and inconsistency for decades." The new rule went into effect April 30.

Metro was among scores of transit agencies across the U.S. that for years routinely violated the old regulations with impunity because the Federal Transit Administration failed to enforce its rules.

In his remarks to his board, Catoe admitted Washington Metro chartered close to 2,500 buses in fiscal 2007, reaping more than \$1.6 million in revenue. In addi-

tion, Metro provided more than 600 hours of charter service to the region's schools during the year.

Some of the charter service was for Washington Redskins games and to Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts. All of it represented business that should have gone to private bus operators.

The coalition told Catoe that Metro's former charter customers "will be well served (in the future) by the region's private operators and will not experience any lack

of service availability."

The coalition is composed of the United Motorcoach Association, the National School Transportation Association, the California Bus Association, the Northwest Motorcoach Association, the International Motor Coach Group Inc., and the Trailways Transportation System.

Its members represent roughly 1,250 motorcoach and school bus companies operating more than 124,000 vehicles nationwide.

Connecticut coach operator lauded for fine maintenance

HARTFORD, Conn. — A Connecticut motorcoach operator has been singled out for its outstanding maintenance practices by the state's largest newspaper.

In an article on a sharp decline in truck inspections in Connecticut, the *Hartford Courant* noted that the maintenance record of Constitution Coach in Bolton, Conn., were a sharp contrast to a group of trucking companies whose big rigs were being ordered off the road 85 percent of the time when stopped by state inspectors.

"At the other extreme," said the *Courant*, Constitution Coach, with

its fleet of 12 buses, has had 72 inspections in the past 30 months, only one of which resulted in a vehicle being pulled out of service.

"Our philosophy in this business is that maintenance is No. 1," company President Paul Snelgrove told the newspaper last month. "In this business you really can't mess around because we're carrying 55 lives at a time."

Snelgrove also told the *Courant* he knows there are trucking companies that don't share his philosophy. And with haulers squeezed by rising fuel prices, he said he was concerned that poorly maintained

trucks on Connecticut roads will only get worse as companies try to save money.

"You can't cut your drivers' pay; they'll leave. You can't cut your insurance; it's fixed. You can't cut your fuel costs," Snelgrove said. "So, where do you cut that doesn't show up right away? Maintenance."

On-highway truck safety has been a high-profile issue in Connecticut for the past three years. That's because in July 2005, a runaway dump truck plowed into a line of cars at the base of Avon Mountain. The truck driver and three others were killed.

Following the tragedy, Gov. M. Jodi Rell — stung by reports that truck inspections had declined sharply in the state — quickly ordered more examiners onto Connecticut highways.

The following year, roadside truck inspections increased 30

percent.

But it didn't last.

Figures show that about 18,600 trucks were inspected on Connecticut roads last year, a 20 percent drop from the previous year and not far above levels before the crash in Avon.

North Carolina wants idling limit

RALEIGH, N.C. — Buses with a capacity of 16 or more passengers would be banned from idling beyond five minutes per hour in North Carolina under a proposed rule.

The proposal includes a provision that would allow a bus to idle for up to 15 minutes an hour when passengers are on board and temperatures are below 50 degrees or

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THE DOCKET

Americans blast Canada's visitor rebate program

OTTAWA, Ont. — The revamped visitor-tax-rebate program implemented in Canada just over a year has been given low marks by group tour operators in the U.S.

In a survey prepared for the Ottawa-based Tourism Industry Association of Canada, the country's Foreign Convention and Tour

Incentive Program was panned by American tour operators.

The Foreign Convention and Tour Incentive Program was implemented in April 2007 as a replacement for Canada's Goods and Services Tax rebate program. (See April 1, 2007 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Here are key survey findings:

- The Foreign Convention and Tour Incentive Program is too cumbersome and complicated. Those who regard the rebate process as burdensome outnumbered those who do not by a ratio of more than 7 to 1.

- Among tour operators who

utilized similar programs in other countries, operators preferred to work with another rebate program over Canada's program by a ratio of 3 to 1.

- U.S. operators gave consistently low ratings on the impact of the program on their Canadian business; probable usefulness in increasing their future Canadian

business, and the likely effect on Canada's competitiveness as a tourism destination.

Tour operators made several suggestions, including simplification of the process.

For more information, contact Tourism Industry Association of Canada Vice President Chris Jones at (613) 238-7557.

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E-Verify mandated by feds

WASHINGTON — Many motorcoach operators likely will be impacted by a new amendment to an executive order issued by President Bush.

The order requires all executive agencies and departments entering into contracts to verify the employment eligibility of all persons hired during the contract term by the contractor to perform employment duties within the United States, and all persons assigned by the contractor to perform work within the United States on the federal contract.

At the same time, the Department of Homeland Security designated its "E-Verify program" as the system federal contractors must use to verify employment eligibility.

The order appears to cover contracts issued by the U.S. Department of Defense, meaning those involving bus transportation of military personnel, and those issued by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

E-Verify is an Internet-based system operated by the Department of Homeland Security and the Social Security Administration that allows employers to electroni-

cally verify the employment eligibility of newly hired workers.

The executive order impacts all companies entering into federal contracts with executive-branch agencies and departments. It obligates the contractors to electronically verify the employment eligibility of all of the employer's new hires (regardless of whether those employees perform work pursuant to the federal contract), and all employees (implying new hires and current employees) who will perform work pursuant to the contract.

It is unclear, however, whether the amended order requires employers to perform an E-Verify on current employees assigned to work on future federal contracts. That issue could be resolved when the Department of Homeland Security releases regulations covering E-Verify usage.

It also is not clear when the executive order goes into effect.

One analysis of the order by a large law firm said the order is effective immediately for all new federal contracts. However, as a practical matter, implementing the obligation into future contracts likely will take time.

Rule eases drug reporting

WASHINGTON — Any commercial vehicle driver who tests positive in a drug screening or refuses to be tested may have those results reported to their state licensing agency under an interim final rule.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration issued the rule last month, essentially removing any roadblocks employers or drug testing facilities may face in reporting positive results or refusals to state licensing agencies.

The interim rule clears up a bureaucratic conflict between the wording of the regulation and the intent of FMCSA officials.

"We do not want our regulations to have the effect of prohibiting employers and (third-party administrators) of owner-operators from providing the drug and alcohol test results of (commercial vehicle) drivers with CDLs," FMCSA officials wrote in the text explaining the rule.

"The department believes that state action to suspend or revoke the CDLs of (commercial vehicle) drivers who violate DOT rules — until they demonstrate they have successfully completed the (substance abuse professional) process — can have important safety benefits."

Georgia freezes fuel tax rates until at least January

While politicians in at least a half-dozen states, including Florida, Missouri and New York, talk about providing relief from sky-high gasoline and diesel prices by reining in fuel taxes, only one state has done it so far — Georgia.

Gov. Sonny Perdue signed an executive order suspending a scheduled increase in Georgia's tax collected on fuel purchases that was due to take effect July 1. The action will result in a loss of as much as \$80 million in state revenue for roads during the next year.

Georgia law requires the state Department of Revenue to recalculate the state excise tax and sales tax on motor fuels every six months to adjust for changes in prices. The excise tax is 7.5 cents per gallon with the sales tax charged on top of that.

With fuel prices hovering around \$4 per gallon across the

state, fuel tax rates were set to increase in July. The diesel tax was slated to move up 4.2 cents per gallon, while the gas tax was expected to be bumped up by 2.9 cents per gallon.

Perdue said suspending the tax hike not only will benefit drivers but also "benefit some of our most important industries."

This marks the second time in three years state taxes on fuel have been frozen in Georgia. Perdue first suspended collection of state fuel taxes for one month in the fall of 2005, following Hurricane Katrina when pump prices topped \$3 per gallon.

The governor's latest order remains in place until the legislature convenes in January.

Although few states appear eager to follow Georgia's lead, fuel taxes generally were stable during the first quarter of this year.

Only six states saw increases, with the higher tax rates resulting from automatic price escalators adopted by those states years ago.

There were diesel fuel tax

increases in Michigan, Minnesota, Virginia and Washington.

In Nebraska, the state tax on fuels goes up 1.2 cents per gallon July 1 as a result of a bill adopted

by the legislature earlier this year.

The bill also changed the mechanism for fuel tax collections in Nebraska to include an excise tax.

Pa. Turnpike lease bill filed

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Legislation has been filed in Pennsylvania that would allow Gov. Ed Rendell to lease the Pennsylvania Turnpike to private investors for 75 years.

State Rep. Dwight Evans, D-Philadelphia, and Rep. Steven Cappelli, R-Lycoming, introduced HB2593 last month. The bill was assigned to the Pennsylvania House Committee on Transportation.

Several news organizations reported that the earliest a vote on the proposed turnpike lease could occur is September.

Rendell has been trying to lease the Pennsylvania Turnpike as

a way to generate revenue for highways, bridges and mass transit. He announced in May that a consortium of Abertis Infraestructuras of Spain and a subsidiary of New York-based Citibank bid \$12.8 billion for the right to lease the turnpike.

Rendell's proposed lease would be similar but not identical to the 2006 lease of the Indiana Toll Road to a private investment group from Spain and Australia.

One difference would be that the lease would not include a "non-compete" clause that would prevent the state from fixing or building so-called "free" routes within proximity to the tolled highway.

engine can be shut down so it cannot be restarted.

Such action could prevent a terrorist from driving the coach to a target, such as a bridge, tunnel or government facility, and give police time to reach the location of the coach.

"We figure if the driver stopped suddenly, the terrorist might blow up the coach, but if it slows down gradually, it could give them time to re-think what they're doing," suggested Pard, who hopes to have the units on the DeCamp buses in two or three months.

Bouffar said the emergency system so far has been activated twice after buses were stolen. In one case, police went to the scene and made an arrest. In the other, the thief parked the bus and the system was used to kill the engine to prevent the bus from being driven further.

Stop theft

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

depending on the type of service purchased.

Bouffar said the devices provide a wide variety of routine tracking services from pinpointing the location of a coach to monitoring engines, transmissions and tires. They also can alert the company dispatcher if a coach is traveling faster than a preset speed.

But the feature that coach operators are talking about the most is its theft and terrorist deterrent capability.

The driver activates the system by pressing a panic button, sending alerts to the bus company's dispatcher and Saucon's help desk. From either command center, the bus can be remotely slowed down and gradually brought to a stop. Once it is stopped, the

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Time for the industry to go on marketing offensive

By Dave Millhouser

It seems like every time there's a big motorcoach-oriented meeting, local media briefly swarm the venue and gush about how nice buses have become. They top it off by saying: "Ooops... We're not supposed to call them buses anymore. They're motorcoaches!"

Funny, if it weren't so sad.

Those two phrases seem to be the bulk of what we, as an industry, have been able to muster as a marketing plan during the past decade.

Comedians have described us as a "bad neighborhood on wheels"... and if you want to read a really troubling take on the industry's image problem, go to http://www.theonion.com/content/news/30_miserable_lives_lost_in.

In recent months, however, articles in *Bus & Motorcoach News* have highlighted what appear to be glimmers of hope.

In one, a study points to increased ridership and sees evidence this modest trend will continue. Good news but with a couple of caveats. The gains seem to be in the line-haul and commuter segments. Airline incompetence and fuel

prices have driven folks on to buses; now it's our job to hold 'em.

With effort and luck these new customers might consider taking bus tours or chartering coaches as an attractive alternative for leisure travel. That's critical because the line and commuter segments are a fraction of our business.

The other ray of sunshine is the Green Operators Motor Coach Council — newly renamed and retooled as the Motorcoach Council. (See story on Page 1.)

This enlightened group is beginning an effort to garner national attention for the motorcoach industry **and** its positive impact on the environment when compared to other forms of passenger transportation. Reducing air pollution and dependence on foreign oil — now that's a godsend for us tree-hugging patriots.

Good stuff, but we offer so much more.

Buses are safer, quieter and more comfortable than virtually any other form of passenger transport. We're flexible. We can pick you up anywhere there's asphalt, no hassle with airports or train stations. We provide modern enter-

tainment systems, and trump automobile travel with the ultimate answer to "are we there yet?" — the lavatory.

Early in my career I sold charters for a small bus company. The only other operator in town parked at our facility, so it was pretty simple to track literally every trip in the market. My approach was simple. I called on everyone who ever chartered a bus and offered to do exactly the same job for less money.

That was a horrible idea. It would have been smarter to ask for the same, or a bit more, and then sell the customer on all we had to offer — nicer buses, uniformed drivers, personal service.

There's an old saying: When you're in a hole — stop digging. As an industry we've been burrowing deeper, spending a great deal of energy trying to be the cheapest way to travel. We react to highly visible accidents, instead of (on better days) telling the real story... that even on a bad day we're about the safest way to travel.

We should be talking, in an organized way, about all we do better than any other form of transportation. We are economical but

we're also safe, quiet, comfortable and flexible. Buses often finish trips while planes, trains and automobiles are hung up by weather. We're good but we haven't done enough to make sure the public knows.

One of the guys I respect most in the business once told me that his major competitor targeted the bottom 10 percent of the economic spectrum. My friend targeted the bottom 80 percent. He doesn't apologize for his service, he SELLS it (while the other guys wait hopefully for folks who can't afford a car). Guess who's winning that market?

Coach builders have produced a generation of motorcoaches that offer a stunning array of creature comforts. You've paid tons of money to buy them but somehow they're still perceived as people trucks.

What to do? I'm not certain but it will require a consolidated effort by the whole industry. Manufacturers, vendors and operators all need to work together to tell our story. Best guess is there are dozens of ideas out there; some already have been imple-

mented regionally by creative companies.

The Motorcoach Council is a step in the right direction. We need someone to sell the whole package. It should be a source of great pride to be part of the bus industry.

We take people to work, to see wonderful things and to be with their loved ones. Nothing could be more honorable than that, and yet our virtues remain one of America's most closely guarded secrets.

Somehow we need to get the defense off the field and play some offense.

Saying "this is NOT your father's Oldsmobile" doesn't cut it as a marketing plan; after all, Oldsmobile has moved on to vehicle heaven.

Dave Millhouser is a bus industry marketing consultant and freelance writer. Contact him at: dave_millhouser@hotmail.com.



Dave Millhouser

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When Harry Zoltok put his first coach on the road in 1933, he started a tradition of bringing operators and riders together. Today, 75 years later, MCI is still giving operators the top-quality, reliable equipment they need to fill seats over the long haul. From dependable workhorses and top-of-the-line luxury models to a hybrid coach that's ready to take the industry to new places, MCI is there, with more powertrain options than anyone. Plus, we back every coach with our Pro Support network of technical support, service, financing and more. It's all to fulfill our Going further pledge: excellence at every turn.

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So long, Cat

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industry will be immediate, profound and long lasting. Initially it will affect four North American over-the-road coach brands: MCI, Van Hool, BCI Falcon and Blue Bird.

Caterpillar is the standard engine in BCI Falcon and Blue Bird coaches, and an option in MCIs and Van Hools.

When Detroit Diesel begins exclusively supplying engines to Setra in 2010 (see March 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*) and Caterpillar leaves the market, MCI and Van Hool will — at this point — have a single engine supplier, Cummins.

In fact, Cummins is expected to be the major benefactor of Cat's decision. Cummins is a long-time supplier of motorcoach and truck engines, but its sales to the coach industry over the years have lagged far behind those of Detroit Diesel.

"We believe Caterpillar's decision in part reflects the technological lead that Cummins has in on-highway (commercial vehicle) engines, where emission standards and regulation are increasing, and competing with the need for fuel efficiency," Standard & Poor's equity research said in a note.

Similar speculation appeared in news accounts of Cat's announcement. One report suggested Caterpillar may have decided its ACERT engine, which cost hundreds of millions of dollars in development costs, wouldn't be competitive in the 2010 regulatory environment.

Meanwhile, even though Caterpillar says its dealers will continue to provide long-term support and service for the engines it has in the market, the company's departure from the bus industry likely will have negative implications for the resale value of coaches equipped

with Cat engines.

Asked to comment on Cat's announcement, MCI released a statement from Patricia Ziska, company vice president and chief customer officer:

"MCI is continuing to invest in powertrain research and development. Since 2004, there have been a number of highway engine offerings required to meet the new emission changes. MCI has provided its customers with the best technology and innovation available and will continue to do so.

"MCI plans to continue to offer all three engines (Detroit, Cat, Cummins) in 2008 through 2009, with reassurance from all engine manufacturers that service and support will continue."

A spokesman for ABC Companies, distributor of Van Hool coaches, was not immediately available.

So, what does Cat plan to do when it's no longer supplying engines for over-the-road trucks and buses?

It says it plans to invest \$1 billion over the next two years to expand its off-highway machinery line, particularly equipment used in mining and large-infrastructure construction.

Caterpillar said its alliance with Navistar will mean the introduction of a North American Cat-branded, heavy-duty truck for use in large projects, such as road construction, by 2010.

In a statement, Caterpillar Group President Douglas Oberhelman said: "With nearly 90 percent of our engine business being off-highway, we'll continue to concentrate on our substantial and growing opportunities to supply engines in the petroleum, marine, electric power-generation and industrial markets — as well as produce engines for our own construction and mining equipment."

Museum Spring Fling draws crowd

HERSHEY, Pa. — This year's version of the Museum of Bus Transportation Spring Fling, held here last month, is being called a big success by the event's organizers.

More than 400 people attended the annual celebration of all things bus, including a bus display, author's table, flea market, food, and museum tours, surpassing last year's attendance by at least 50 guests, reported museum board member Bob Beard.

"This industry event... continues to grow every year," said Beard.

Most of the fling's activities are conducted in the museum's George Sage Complex, which serves as a storage annex and shop facility.

Mr. Sage, who died in late 2006, was the former owner of Bonanza Bus Lines and a major benefactor of the museum.

For the day, buses stored in the Sage building are parked outside and the largest bus memorabilia flea market in North America is conducted inside. This year, there were 28 tables offering bus knickknacks, 11 more tables than last year.

In addition, there was an author's table, a new feature, where six authors were available to sell and autograph their industry-related books.

The '08 fling also attracted



Bus book author Ken Springirth, left foreground, and Terry Consentino, adviser to the Museum of Bus Transportation, look over collectibles on sale at the museum's annual Spring Fling flea market last month. Setting up the flea market in the museum annex necessitated moving buses outside (below), where they were put on display.

four new corporate sponsors, ABC Companies, Michaud Bus Sales, Motor Coach Industries and Prevost Car, all of which helped with donations and involvement. MCI and Lancer Insurance also provided gifts to the museum.

Wolf Bus Lines of York

Springs, Pa., and H.E. Rohrer Inc. of Duncannon, Pa., donated buses and drivers to shuttle attendees between the Sage complex and the museum.

For more information, including photos from the event, go to www.busmuseum.org.

Motorcoach Network event in Pigeon Forge

MOUNT JACKSON, Va. — Pigeon Forge, Tenn., voted the nation's top motorcoach destination by the National Motorcoach Network, is hosting the network's 25th anniversary celebration later this month.

The network is bringing its annual Invitational 100 to Pigeon

Forge July 17-20, at the MainStay Suites Hotel.

The Invitational 100 takes its name from its practice of limiting registrants to a maximum of 100.

"If you enjoy developing a working relationship with tour operators in a true networking environment, while building your

group tour business, this is a meeting you should attend," says network founder Stephen M. Kirchner.

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

On-line registration is available on the Website, or call (888) 733-5287.

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Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

ISSUE NO. 126

A PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED MOTORCOACH ASSOCIATION

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Motorcoach council

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the experts," said Holland.

In addition to a marketing campaign, the council's new goals include developing a financing plan, an organizational structure, and partnerships with industry and non-industry businesses, plus establishing a strong Internet presence.

Funds to run the organization and pay for the marketing effort will come from donations from individual motorcoach operators,

manufacturers and others involved in the industry, such as parts and service suppliers, hotels and entertainment venues.

Holland said fund raising efforts are under way with the promotion of a Founding Partner Program that allows motorcoach operators to become part of the group with a \$2,000 donation, and manufacturers and national associations to join for \$10,000.

"We're trying to get everyone in the industry on board and we believe that being a founding partner will be valuable as we develop

the program," he added.

He said special emphasis will be placed on gaining the support of every state and regional motorcoach association in the U.S. and Canada, each of which will be able to join with a \$2,000 payment.

"Their participation is critical because they can help with the grassroots efforts by reaching their members," he stressed.

Interest in the organization has been running high since its creation last fall and its formal introduction to the industry at the United Motorcoach Association Expo in

January and the American Bus Association Marketplace in February. Since then more than 200 motorcoach businesses have said they would like to be involved.

In addition to Holland, others on the board are: Brian Annett of Annett Bus Lines, vice president; Callen Hotard of Calco/Hotard, secretary-treasurer; Jack Wigley of All Aboard America, director; Gladys Gillis of Starline Luxury Coaches, director, and Steve Hadad of Bieber Tourways, director.

Many in the industry long have thought motorcoach operators

would benefit from a national marketing or promotional campaign. Over the years, however, a number of efforts to develop a program have bumped up against a series of roadblocks: high costs, limited financial resources, inadequate and sustained leadership, and the fractured nature of the industry.

Information about the council can be found at its original Website, www.gocoach.org.

A new site is being created and once it's completed and online, visitors to the old site will be redirected to the new location.

Saving fuel

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

MCI says that reducing highway speed by 5 miles per hour reduces fuel consumption by 7 percent. Cost savings: up to 35 cents a gallon.

MCI also notes that sudden starts and stops increase fuel consumption. The more smoothly a driver accelerates or decelerates, the better the mileage, with potential fuel savings of 5 percent

around town. Cost savings: up to 25 cents per gallon.

Other driving tips: Use the cruise control feature as much as possible, and reduce the road speed governor setting to 68 miles per hour. Also, drive in top gear as much as possible and minimize service brake activity.

Inspect tires to assure they are in good condition, and check all wheels to make sure they are in alignment. Poor alignment can decrease fuel economy by up to 2

percent, says ABC. It also accelerates tire wear and decreases vehicle performance. MCI says that poor alignment can reduce fuel economy by as much as 6 percent because it forces the engine to work harder. Potential cost savings: up to 28 cents a gallon.

Keep your engine tuned. A properly tuned engine can improve mileage by 4 percent, says MCI. Potential cost savings: up to 20 cents a gallon.

ABC recommends checking

the air system and repairing leaks to minimize compressor run time. While compressor duty cycles may only be 5 percent, they can reduce fuel economy by up to 2 percent when pumping.

The cooling system is another hot-button item for ABC. Keeping cores clean and unobstructed to minimize fan clutch engagement saves fuel. The fan can reduce fuel economy by 5 to 10 percent when fully engaged, ABC points out.

Other ABC tips:

- When the engine is off, lower the window shades to reduce the solar heat load and air conditioning required to cool the interior.

- Remove unnecessary weight or cargo. During cold months, remove ice and snow accumulations.

- Match engine power to terrain and service. In some cases, a 50 horsepower reduction can increase fuel economy by 5 percent.

Both companies also highlight the old fuel saving stand-by, reducing idling. ABC says that an hour of idling in an eight-hour day can decrease fuel economy by more than 1 percent. MCI recommends avoiding extended periods of idling while taking breaks, waiting for tour groups and the like. It notes that many coach models have an optional cut-off/limit-idle feature that automatically shuts off the engine if the coach has been idling too long.

Finally, MCI recommends that coach operators shop carefully for fuel. "Savvy drivers know which states, counties and facilities offer the best prices and plan their fill-ups accordingly," says MCI. "In addition, several software programs are available that track fuel prices by region and facility."

In conjunction with its promotion, ABC is introducing a "fuel economy audit." The audit includes a 10-point "economy inspection" and recommendations for fuel savings. It is being offered free for one coach per company.

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N.C. idling

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

above 80 degrees Fahrenheit.

There also is an exemption for idling during maintenance, and buses with 2008 or later engines meeting the "California clean-idle" standard of 30 grams of oxides of nitrogen per idling hour would be totally exempt from the rule.

The North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources Division of Air Quality is proposing the restrictions. For more information, go to the division of air quality Website at <http://daq.state.nc.us/rules/idle/>.

MCI offers additional training via Internet 'webinar'

SCHAUMBERG, Ill. — Motor Coach Industries expanded the way it communicates with its customers last month by conducting its first on-line seminar.

Such educational forums, conducted via the Internet, are called Webinars, and MCI said it plans to have more, giving operators a new option for staying up to date on coach technology and sharpening their business acumen without leaving their offices.

The company is planning webinars that provide tutorials on subjects ranging from clean-diesel engines, to how to create a "green" marketing message and stir customer demand.

"We're bringing the classroom directly to our customers," said

Patricia Ziska, MCI vice president and chief customer officer. "We're saving them time, money and natural resources by presenting valuable information in an immediate, interactive format."

The first MCI webinar dealt with clean-diesel regeneration and diesel particulate filters; it attract-

ed more than 80 customers.

MCI noted that since there are more than 650 MCI coaches on the road with clean-diesel engines, such an interactive, on-line session was timely and on a topic customers both care about and are interested in.

The webinar was led by MCI

field support staff members Scott Crawford and Trevor Olynik, who reviewed the diesel particulate filter system on all three MCI engine options: Cummins, Caterpillar and Detroit Diesel. Participants also could ask questions.

"The content was excellent," said Mike Pjevach of Wisconsin

Coach Lines, a Coach USA company. "It's a cost-effective way to train, and we appreciate MCI's efforts and leadership."

The next webinar is July 9, with others to follow this summer and in the fall. To register or for more information, e-mail marketing@micoach.com.

Prevost expanding Tennessee facility

WHITES CREEK, Tenn. — Prevost Car plans to relocate its Tennessee Parts and Service Center from Whites Creek to a new facility in Nashville during the summer of 2009.

The new Nashville center will be less than 10 miles from downtown but still fairly close to the current location. It also will be reachable by major highways.

The move will more than double the size of the current 22,000-square-foot facility, increasing space for service and parts to 58,000 square feet.

Thirteen service bays, up from the current seven, will be available to provide routine maintenance, cosmetic upgrades or major accident repairs.

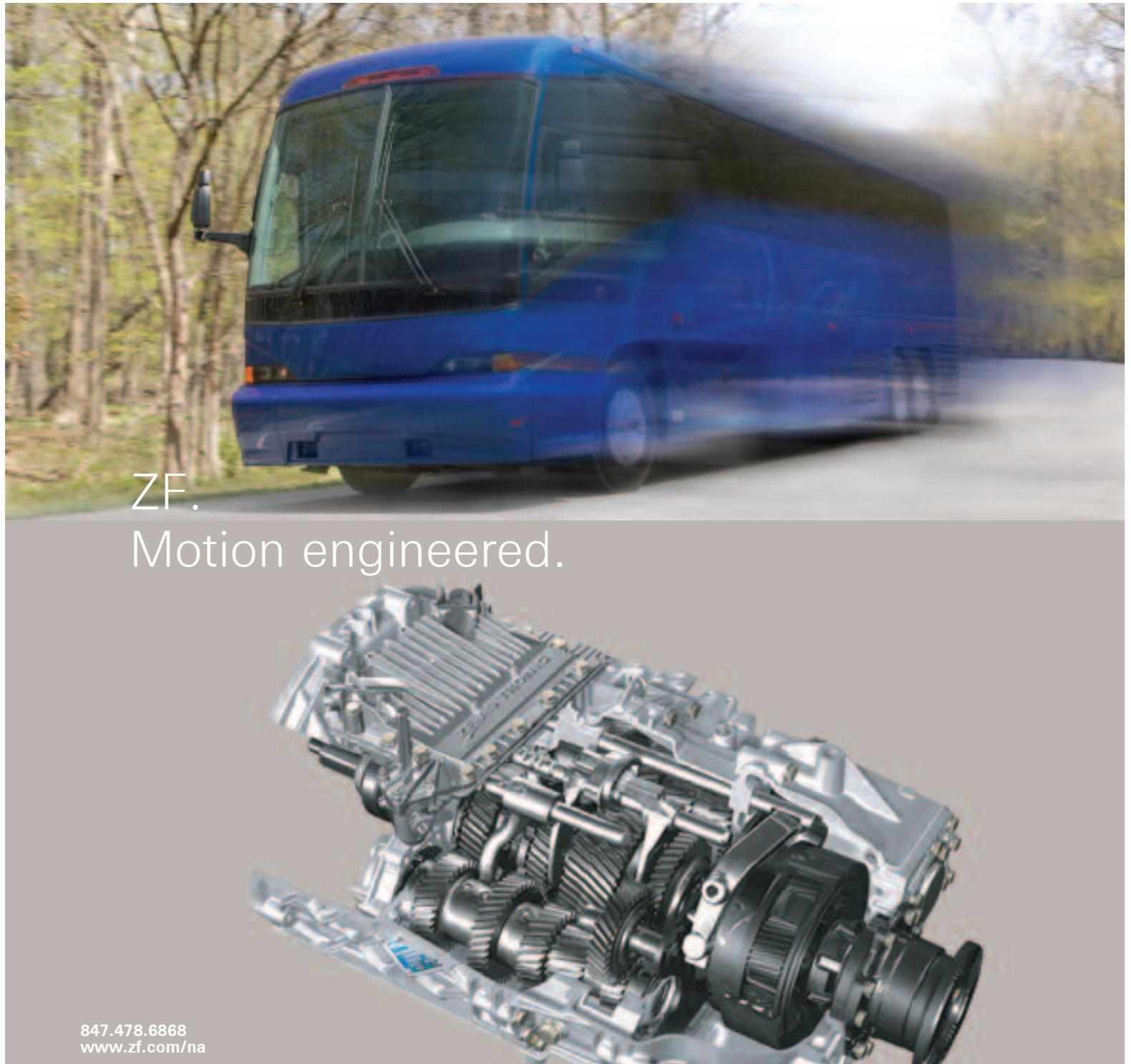
The expanded warehouse space will allow Prevost to increase the efficiency of its U.S. parts distribution.

In addition, exterior space at the new site may be used for future expansion or long-term vehicle parking for customers.

The facility is being custom-built, meaning the design of its service area, parts warehouse, customer lounge and other amenities will be specific to a motorcoach center.

"Our service centers offer customers the fastest, most-reliable service for Prevost vehicles and all other coach, motorhome or bus makes and models," said Randy Castillo, service network manager.

Prevost has six North American service centers. Rose Baker is manager of the Tennessee branch, while the parts manager is Jeff Taylor and the service manager is Bruce Doughty.



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