

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

An eye-opening experience

Crosswell buys failed operator but pays dearly

HUNTINGTON, W.Va. — Taking over a troubled motorcoach company can be a trying, as well as costly, experience.

But it can be an uplifting one as well.

John W. Crosswell, president of Crosswell Bus Lines in Williamsburg, Ohio, felt the highs and lows first hand when he took over the West Virginia Coach Co. of Huntington, after its financially strapped owner walked away from the business.

The venture is costing Crosswell upwards of \$175,000, but has netted him a busload of favorable publicity and a great personal feeling of having helped hundreds of people, many of them school children.

Crosswell, always on the look out for opportunities to grow his charter-and-tour business, stepped in after West Virginia Coach owner Scott Carson took the troubled company he had purchased from his father a few years earlier into federal bankruptcy court.

"It was about two hours from our home office and we figured it would give us more of an eastern reach from our location," said



John Crosswell

'We didn't want to go into a new market and be considered evil.'

Crosswell, who paid the court \$35,000 for West Virginia Coach Co.'s book of business, name, telephone number, office equipment and shop tools.

The expansion extends Crosswell Bus Lines' reach into all of West Virginia, plus central and eastern Kentucky.

After he moved in in May, Crosswell discovered that West

Virginia Coach had taken in about \$175,000 in advanced deposits from 166 school classes, social groups and other organizations, and apparently spent all of it to support daily operations. In addition, the former owner had notified the groups that paid the advances that Crosswell had acquired the company and would be handling

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Roadcheck '05 finds more motorcoaches with safety problems

WASHINGTON — For the third consecutive year, more potentially unsafe motorcoaches were put out of service during the annual roadside safety blitz conducted by the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance.

A record number of over-the-road buses were inspected this year during Roadcheck 2005, and a record number were ordered off the road. The percentage of coaches that were put out of service by bus and truck safety inspectors also was higher this year than last.

In fact, among the three categories of vehicles inspected — trucks, buses and hazardous materials haulers, buses posted the biggest percentage increase in out-of-service rate. The out-of-service rate for trucks declined for the first time in three years.

The CVSA, which has sponsored Roadcheck annually for the past 17 years, reported that 860 motorcoaches received safety checks in the U.S. during last month's 72-hour inspection program, a substantial increase from recent years. A total of 589 motorcoaches and their drivers were checked last year, compared to 515 in 2003, 334 in 2002, 501 in

2001 and 433 in 2000.

The out-of-service rate for buses this year was 11.7 percent, up notably from last year's rate of 9.6 percent. The rate in 2003 was 9.5 percent.

The driver out-of-service rate this year was unchanged from last year — at 2.7 percent. Two years ago, the driver out-of-service rate was 1.7 percent.

Roadcheck, which is primarily aimed at checking over-the-road trucks, was conducted this year at 1,348 locations throughout North America. A record number of vehicle inspectors, 9,903, participated and they checked a record number of vehicles, 60,562. Last year, the number of inspectors totaled 8,200 and 57,785 vehicles were checked.

The overall out-of-service rate this year for all trucks and buses inspected in the U.S. and Canada was 22.6 percent, down from 23.9 percent last year. It was the first year-to-year decline since 2002.

The out-of-service rate for all drivers checked during the program this year was 4.5 percent, down from 5 percent last year.

A total of 30,202 CVSA decals

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High-profile Mike Rochette retiring at Prevost

SAINTE-CLAIRE, Quebec — Michael Rochette, the familiar face of Prevost Car at North American motorcoach trade shows and other industry gatherings for the past 22 years, is leaving the company.

The 62-year-old vice president of sales at the Sainte-Claire-based coach manufacturer is retiring next week. His last day is July 22.

Rochette, who joined Prevost in 1983, after spending 14 years as head of marketing at Bombardier, has played a key role in the growth of Prevost and its two principal motorcoach markets — seated coaches and entertainer bus shells.

He has headed sales for the two sectors at various times during his tenure and several times directed

sales for both at the same time. "Wherever I was needed," he says.

Long one of the industry's highest-profile executives, Rochette has been a familiar figure at motorcoach trade shows where he would spend countless hours selling coaches and discussing coaches, as well as talking about the ins and outs of the coach indus-

try and just about anything else attendees cared to visit about.

He has been a keen observer of industry trends as well, and was instrumental in developing marketing strategies and sales techniques that helped grow Prevost. And he was often at his best when it came

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Michael Rochette



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Tourist train operator buys western Canada Gray Line operations

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Western Canada has a major new player in the motorcoach tour-and-charter market.

Armstrong Hospitality Group Ltd., owners and operators of Rocky Mountaineer Vacations and the popular Rocky Mountaineer train, has purchased the Gray Line sightseeing-and-charter bus operations in Vancouver and Victoria, B.C., and Banff, Alberta.

Armstrong purchased the three operations from Greyhound Canada Transportation and its parent company, Laidlaw International. While a purchase price was

not revealed, Laidlaw said it suffered a \$5.8 million loss on the sale. (See related story on Page 6.)

The sale includes roughly 150 vehicles, including 110 motorcoaches, 27 double-decker sightseeing buses and 3 trolley buses, and 400 full-time and seasonal employees, all within the region that Rocky Mountaineer Vacations currently operates.

A new business unit, Gray Line West, has been set up to operate the three companies and Paul Tilbury has been named managing director. Most recently, Tilbury has been vice president of guest

services at Rocky Mountaineer Vacations. He has more than 20 years experience in the hospitality and tourism industry, the majority of it overseeing multiple chains of restaurants in Canada and the U.S.

Each Gray Line unit also has a new general manager. Scott Roberts is heading Gray Line Vancouver, Gary Gale is managing Gray Line Victoria, and Glen Christie is G.M. of Gray Line Banff.

Other than new management, Armstrong said it expects the Gray Line tour and charter schedules will remain intact with few immediate operational changes.

"This acquisition follows our strategy to manage and own Canadian travel products," said Peter Armstrong, president and CEO of the hospitality operation bearing his name. "We are proud to be aligned with a powerful worldwide brand such as Gray Line."

Interestingly, the purchase brings Armstrong back to the motorcoach industry. Prior to forming Rocky Mountaineer in 1989, Armstrong was executive vice president of corporate development and a partner in Gray Line of Vancouver.

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Greyhound testing express service

CHICAGO — Greyhound Lines Inc. is testing new express service in three major north-central markets.

The pilot program, being tried in the Chicago, Milwaukee and Minneapolis markets, is described as a new phase of the restructuring program the company announced 13 months ago.

On one route, passengers traveling between Chicago and Milwaukee will be able to ride non-stop, rather than making side trips into Skokie, Waukegan and Kenosha. Those stops add up to an hour to the 90-mile trip. Riders opting for the

express service will arrive in two hours or less, depending on traffic.

"If we're successful we will take this into the other regional markets that we have created," Greyhound President and Chief Executive Stephen Gorman told the *Chicago Tribune*.

To help lure new and former customers onto its coaches, Greyhound is taking other steps besides attempting to speed-up service. To the extent possible, it is putting newer or refurbished buses on the express routes.

Greyhound is having about

1,800 of its coaches refurbished, including installing new seats, sound-absorption material and new exterior paint and graphics. (See May 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News* and related story on Page 6.)

Additionally, it has unveiled new uniforms for its drivers, and it is launching a media campaign targeting key passenger groups: youths, ages 18 to 24; Hispanics and African-Americans, and "pragmatic riders," Gorman told the *Tribune*. For the uninitiated, pragmatic passengers are those looking to save money when they travel.

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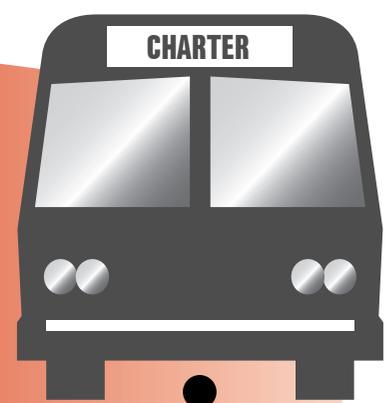
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THE DOCKET

Estate tax deal said to be close

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Senate is close to reaching a compromise that would eliminate the estate tax for all but the wealthiest Americans, *The Wall Street Journal* reports.

Senators from both parties say they could reach a deal by the end of the summer, which would end a debate that has lasted for years, the newspaper said.

The estate tax — often called

the “death tax” by those who oppose it — was rolled back in President Bush’s 2001 tax plan, and is gradually being lowered each year until it is phased out in 2010.

After that, however, the tax is scheduled to revert back to 55 percent.

The Journal, citing congressional sources, reported that senators are close to agreeing on a

plan that would lower the estate tax beyond 2010 and raise the amount per person that’s exempt from estate taxes to more than \$3 million.

The personal exemption was \$1 million in 2001; this year, it is \$1.5 million.

The House is almost certain to back any compromise passed in the Senate, according to the newspaper.

Pace of state tax hikes may slow

NEW YORK — Every state in the union collected more in taxes in 2004 than in 2003, according to a report from the U.S. Census Department. A total of \$593 billion in taxes were collected nationwide last year, up \$44 billion from 2003.

A 7.5 percent rise in sales tax collections, to \$198 billion, and an 8.5 percent increase in income tax payments, to \$197 billion, fueled the overall 8.1 percent

increase. The two taxes account for about two-thirds of all state taxes.

The report may be good news for taxpayers: States will have an easier time balancing budgets and will not need to find new sources of income.

But, cautions Harley Duncan of the Federation of Tax Administrators, “we have to avoid getting too carried away. The comparison is with 2003, which was

not a good year.”

The most populated state, California, collected the most in taxes in 2004 — nearly \$86 billion. New York (\$45 billion) was next, followed by Florida (\$31 billion). The highest per capita rate was in Hawaii, which collected more than \$3,047 for every resident, followed by Wyoming with \$2,968. The lowest rate was in Texas, where \$1,367 was collected per person.

Accessible travel rule revised by DOT

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Transportation has made minor changes to its rule that spells out how regular-route motorcoach companies must respond when they get a request for accessible bus services.

Here are the nuts and bolts of the revised rule: A passenger requesting accessible bus service, which typically means a coach equipped with a wheelchair lift, only has to make the one request for all legs of the requested trip. If the request is for roundtrip service, the initial request covers both the outgoing and return legs of the trip. And, in the case of a multi-leg trip, the request covers all connecting legs.

Once an operator gets a request for accessible service, the operator must transmit a copy of a form confirming the request to the passenger

in one of the following ways:

- By first-class U.S. mail. The operator must transmit the form no later than the end of the next business day following the request.

- By telephone or e-mail. If the passenger can receive the confirmation by either phone or e-mail, then the operator can provide a unique confirmation number to the passenger when the request is made and provide a paper copy of the form when the passenger arrives for the requested trip.

- By facsimile transmission. If the passenger can receive the confirmation by fax, then the operator can transmit the form within 24 hours of the request for transportation.

The rule also applies whenever equivalent service is requested.

The change apparently completes an interim final rule that was

published four years ago.

In announcing the rule, the USDOT also said it would not reconsider the so-called 48-hour rule, which had been pushed by some advocates for the disabled. The 48-hour rule requires individuals requesting accessible travel to make their request at least 48 hours before they wish to travel.

In comments filed with the DOT, the American Bus Association and Coach USA said there was no legal justification for reconsidering the 48-hour rule. The ABA and Coach USA said it makes sense to leave the 48-hour rule alone until compliance, or a lack thereof, provides a greater need to reopen the rule.

The department agreed, saying it will be better able to assess the effectiveness of the rule once it has sufficient data to analyze.

Transit agencies seek charter firms

The following public transit providers have informed the United Motorcoach Association of their intent to provide charter bus service unless willing and able private operators step forward to offer services or to bid on contract opportunities. UMA urges appropriate operators to take the time to respond to these notices:

Reading, Pa. Deadline: 2 p.m. July 18, 2005. Write to: Dennis D. Louwerse, Executive Director/CEO, Berks Area Reading Transportation Authority, 1700 N. 11th St., Reading, PA 19604. Phone: (610) 921-0601.

Saginaw, Mich. Deadline: July 19, 2005. Write to: Sylvester Payne, General Manager, Saginaw

Transit Authority Regional Services, 301 E. Genesee St., Ste. 500, Saginaw, MI 48607. Phone: (989) 907-4000.

Odessa, Texas. Deadline: July 29, 2005. Write to: Ken Smithson, General Manager, Midland-Odessa Urban Transit District, 8007 E. Highway 80, Odessa, Texas 79765. Phone: (432) 561-9990.

Heading to Alaska? Trip permit needed

With the summer travel season in full swing, operators sending coaches to Alaska from the continental U.S. and Canada need to be aware of that state’s registration/permit program.

In a nutshell, Alaska socks it to out-of-state operators.

To operate legally in Alaska, an operator must either register its coach (or coaches) in Alaska, or purchase a \$350 “commercial trip permit.”

Here’s Alaska’s official policy:

Vehicles owned and operated in jurisdictions other than Alaska that are making trips in Alaska may acquire what is called a dual registration. The fee for a tour bus registration is \$300, but the process to obtain a registration reportedly is slow.

To apply for dual registration in Alaska, the state requires the following items be submitted to any DMV Office:

- Current registration from another jurisdiction (photocopy is acceptable)

- Application for Title & Registration

- Fees

- Canadian Vehicles — The applicant must provide proof of the heavy vehicle use tax payment or present an exemption at the time of application.

Operators can no longer register as they are coming into the

state. A list of Alaska Department of Motor Vehicle offices can be found at www.state.ak.us/local/akpages/ADMIN/dmv/office/index.htm.

For a one-time (up to 30 days) trip to Alaska, the state offers a Commercial Vehicle Trip Permit. These may be obtained at the Tok Weigh Station on the Alaska Highway. The weigh station phone number is (907) 883-4591.

To pay for the permit, however, the weigh station does not accept cash. Payment must be by MasterCard, VISA, Comdata check, T-check or money order. The fee is \$350 for commercial buses, trucks, and vans. Yes, it costs more for the permit than to register.

For more information, go to www.state.ak.us/local/akpages/ADMIN/dmv/reg/index.htm.

Some tax and interstate travel experts think Alaska’s policy would wither under a court challenge. They contend it violates the commerce clause of the U.S. Constitution.

But so far no one has been willing to pursue a legal fight. “Operators simply accept it,” is the way one observer put it.

“Operators need to factor these costs into their plans if they are contracted to go to Alaska,” said one industry executive. “If not, they may get a very nasty surprise at the port of entry.”

Copy of IRP is free for first time ever

ARLINGTON, Va. — The board of the International Registration Plan has decided to make the text of the plan available free.

The decision marks a dramatic change. For three decades, the text of the plan has been sold and cost as much as \$125 per copy in recent years.

Charging for copies of the plan has long been a sore point for many because of the nature of the organization, which authorizes registration of more than 2 million commercial vehicles and functions as an inter-jurisdictional registration plan for 48 states, 10 Canadian provinces and the District of Columbia.

The plan was developed more than 30 years ago under the auspices of the American Association of Motor Vehicles, which originally

copyrighted the plan, and sold it to those who requested a copy. More recently, the plan has been managed by IRP Inc., to which the copyright devolved, IRP sold it for as much as \$125.

This seemed odd to many because the plan is effectively law in 59 jurisdictions, and has been recognized as an interstate compact — at least to some extent — by Congress.

Now, the IRP board has decided that the text of the plan, with the IRP Audit Manual, should be posted on the IRP Web site where it may be downloaded and printed free. Go to www.aamva.org/IRP.

Those wanting a paper copy directly from IRP may still request one, but the charge for downloading, printing and mailing is \$35.

Canadian operators are gearing up for HOS changes

ONTARIO — Canada is adopting new hours of service rules for over-the-road buses and trucks, and Motor Coach Canada is gearing up to orient coach operators on the revamped regulations.

The rules changes, which have been brewing for eight years, will be implemented next year.

“Operators should work on the basis the new rules will be in place by late 2006 and develop tour itineraries accordingly,” said Brian Crow, president of Motor Coach Canada. “Motorcoach companies need to work on this basis to be able to quote tour companies or charter operators.”

Crow noted, for example, that “the new rules could mean that two drivers are required on some tours or that a tour itinerary will have to have a ‘down day’ to allow the driver 24 hours of rest every 15 days.”

Among other things, the new hours-of-service regulations, which were approved by the provinces and the Canadian government:

- Increase the minimum daily off-duty period by 25 percent from 8 hours to 10 hours;

- Require that no fewer than 8 of the hours of off-duty time be taken consecutively, with the additional 2 hours to be taken in increments of no less than a half hour;

- Reduce the daily maximum driving time by 18.8 percent from 16 hours to 13 hours;

- Reduce the daily maximum on-duty time by 12.5 percent from 16 hours to 14 hours, of which no more than 13 hours can be on-duty driving time;

- Eliminate the option to reduce the off-duty time from 8 hours to 4 hours;

- Increase the minimum rest

period for co-drivers using a sleeper berth from 2 hours to 4 consecutive hours;

- Permit within defined parameters, averaging of on-duty and off-duty time over a 48-hour period;

- Reduce the number of available work/rest cycles from three to two: a maximum 70-hour cycle over 7 days and a maximum 120-hour cycle over 14 days;

- For drivers who wish to switch or reset cycles, requiring a minimum of 36 consecutive hours off-duty before “resetting the clock to zero” for the 70-hour cycle and a minimum of 72 consecutive hours

off-duty for the 120-hour cycle;

- Require a minimum 24-hour off-duty period, at least once every 14 days for all drivers.

Additionally, the new rules have a shipper responsibility provision. No motor carrier, shipper, consignee or other person shall request, require or allow a driver to drive and no driver shall drive if:

- The driver’s faculties are impaired to the point where it is unsafe for the driver to drive;

- Driving would jeopardize or be likely to jeopardize the safety or health of the public, the driver or the employees of the motor carrier;

- The driver is the subject of an out-of-service declaration; or

- The driver, in doing so, would not be in compliance with the regulations.

Beginning in November, Motor Coach Canada will conduct a series of seminars to educate coach and tour operators on the rules and is developing an orientation booklet, as well. The first session will be at Motor Coach Canada’s Connections West meeting in Vancouver. Subsequent sessions will be in Halifax and Winnipeg. A session or two in the U.S. also is being discussed.

David Carroll, who represented Motor Coach Canada and the industry at the meetings leading up to the new rules, said the major changes in the rules really need to be understood by the operators.

“While the changes are significant, we believe operators with knowledge of the rules will be able to generally work them into their existing itineraries without a major impact on the tour,” added Crow.

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

Bus operators urged to heed warning

WASHINGTON — In response to the terrorist attacks in London earlier this month, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security issued a threat elevation advisory for intercity passenger rail systems, subways and urban transit systems.

In issuing the advisory, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff did not include the intercity bus industry.

This caused confusion which resulted in the release of a document “designed to provide guidance to bus operators.” In making the release, the department consulted with the American Bus and the United Motorcoach Associations.

“While the (Chertoff) language was designed to convey a sense of urgency to the motorcoach industry, we want to reiterate that we do

not have any specific, credible intelligence indicating an immediate attack in the United States,” the DHS stated.

The agency went on to say that it “strongly encourage(s) all private bus companies... to consider implementing Orange-level processes and procedures based on individual judgments related to service or location vulnerabilities.



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Greyhound results mixed, Laidlaw sets payout

NAPERVILLE, Ill.— Greyhound Lines posted generally lackluster financial results for the three and nine months ended May 31.

However, revenue per bus mile was improved at the nation's largest intercity carrier, a reflection of the extensive system restructuring Greyhound began implementing 13 months ago.

Laidlaw International, the corporate parent of Greyhound, said total revenue at Greyhound for the three months ended May 31, was \$294.5 million, down from year-ago revenue of \$299.7 million. For the nine months ended May 31, Greyhound revenue totaled \$864 million, down from \$881.1 million the year before.

Like many public companies, Laidlaw does not report net income for its subsidiaries. Instead, it reports EBITDA, or operating income plus depreciation and amortization. EBITDA (commonly pronounced e-bit-dah) is essentially

an indicator of liquidity and the ability to service or incur debt.

EBITDA at Greyhound for the three months ended May 31 was \$9.6 million, down from \$15.6 million from the same period in 2004. EBITDA for the nine months ended May 31, however, was \$46.5 million, up from \$37.6 million a year earlier.

Greyhound's revenue for the latest reporting periods declined primarily because of its system overhaul, which has eliminated more than 700 stops from the company route structure.

An increase in the Canadian exchange rate bolstered the revenue picture for the three and nine months ended May 31.

The \$6 million decline in EBITDA for the three months ended May 31 largely resulted from Laidlaw's sale of its Gray Line tour and charter bus operation in western Canada. Laidlaw said it sold the Gray Line units for a \$5.8

million loss. (See related articles on Page 3.)

EBITDA in the nine months ended May 31, improved by \$8.9 million, another reflection of the improving revenue per bus mile, plus lower accident claims costs. Offsetting those gains somewhat were higher fuel costs and the loss on the sale of the Gray Line operations.

Greyhound accounted for roughly 35 percent of total revenue at Laidlaw during the reporting periods ended May 31, but only 7.2 percent of EBITDA during the three months ended May 31, and 12.4 percent for the nine months.

Corporatewide, Laidlaw reported a slight drop in income from continuing operations for the quarter ended May 31, compared the same period in 2004 — \$30 million versus \$32 million.

Despite the drop in income, Laidlaw announced it was instituting a 15-cent per share quarterly

dividend to owners of its common stock. The first dividend will be payable Aug. 25, to shareholders of record Aug. 4. Laidlaw said it intends to pay regular quarterly dividends for the foreseeable future, subject to board approval.

The dividend policy was established in the wake of the company's recapitalization plan that was being wrapped up this month. (See July 1 issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.) Once the debt recapitalization is completed, Laidlaw debt will be reduced by more than \$800 million, to about \$315 million.

"Laidlaw has made substantial progress in the last two years," said Kevin Benson, Laidlaw's president and CEO. "We have focused the portfolio on our core transportation expertise and continue to target profitability improvements in these businesses.... The adoption of a quarterly dividend policy demonstrates our confidence in the earnings power of Laidlaw."

CUSA buys Idaho shuttle

DALLAS — A newly formed subsidiary of CUSA has acquired the rolling stock and contracts of Crew Shuttle Services Inc. of Pocatello, Idaho.

Crew Shuttle Services operates 100 vehicles and provides crew transportation services in Oregon, Washington and Idaho for rail lines.

The 12-year-old company was formed by principals David Sandquist and Michael Woodby. Sandquist will continue to manage the business as general manager, reporting to David Carroll, senior vice president of operations for CUSA, while Woodby has been named director of operations.

Crew Shuttle Services will continue to operate under that name but it will be owned by a new company called CUSA CSS LLC.

CUSA is the largest bus charter and tour company in the United States. In most of the 20 markets where it operates it uses the name Coach USA.

Gray Line

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Armstrong began his career as a doorman at the Hotel Vancouver. That put him in contact daily with a number of bus operations. Eventually, he jumped into the bus industry, first with a company called Spotlight Tours and then a Trailways operation, and finally to Gray Line of Vancouver in

the 1980s.

"Peter's strong tourism industry knowledge, combined with his Gray Line background, provides the organization with a unique perspective and helps to position us for success," said James Terry, Armstrong Hospitality's executive vice president and COO. "We recognize Gray Line as a valued partner to Rocky Mountaineer Vacations and are delighted to

offer a seamless guest experience throughout Canada's West."

Scott Earthy, vice president of corporate development at Armstrong Hospitality, told *Bus & Motorcoach News* that the Gray Line bus and Rocky Mountaineer train operations serve a "very similar" customer base, meaning a consolidation made a great deal of business, as well as customer service, sense. The purchase also

will enable Rocky Mountaineer to expand its vacation offerings, said Earthy.

The Rocky Mountaineer carries more than 80,000 people annually on its famed two-day, all-daylight rail trip between Vancouver and the Canadian Rocky Mountain destinations of Jasper, Banff and Calgary, Alberta.

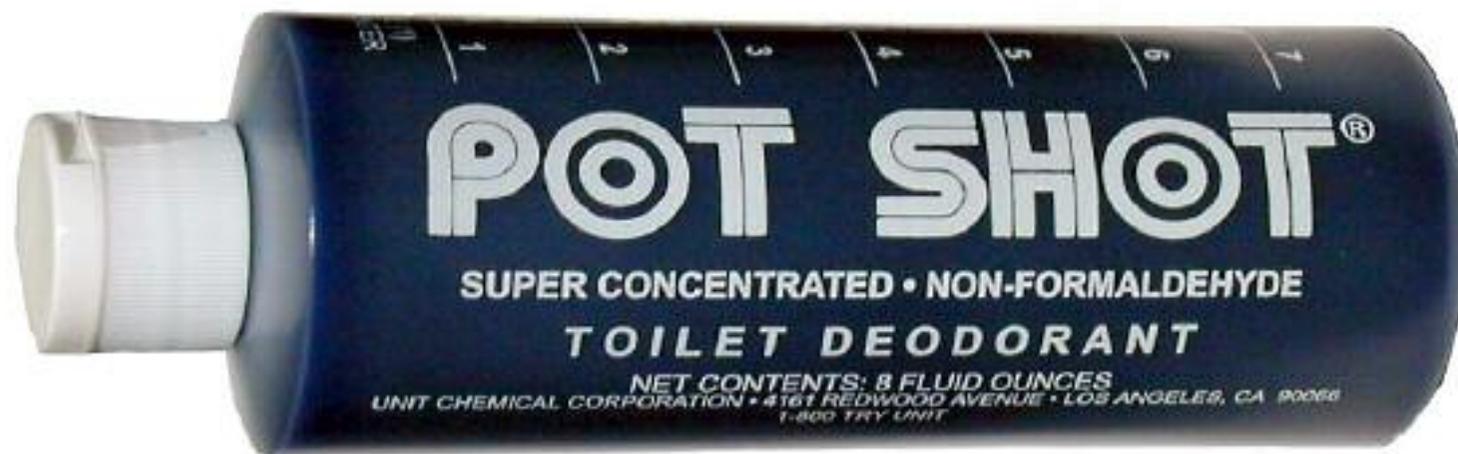
Next year, it will add a third Rocky Mountaineer route between

Vancouver and Jasper, via Prince George — the Fraser Discovery Route, and introduce the Whistler Mountaineer train, a three-hour experience between North Vancouver and Whistler, BC.

The train operation is in its 16th season and is the largest private passenger rail company in North America.

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

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

were issued to vehicles passing inspection.

The out-of-service rate for vehicles checked in Canada was again lower than in the U.S. The U.S. out-of-service rate was 23.3 percent, versus 20.5 percent in Canada.

Of the 5,241 hazardous materials inspections, 19.6 percent of the vehicles (19.1 in 2004) and 2.4 percent of drivers (2.3 in 2004) were placed out of service.

There were 1,143 citations issued for safety-belt violations, up from 755 last year.

CVSA, whose members include enforcement agencies and industry representatives in Canada, Mexico and the United States, sponsors Roadcheck with participation from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators, Transport Canada, and the Secretariat of Communications and Transportation (Mexico.)

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Dot-travel: Phase 2

A new program designed to boost the internet visibility of the travel industry, including motorcoach operators, has moved to a new phase.

"Pre-authentication" has begun for the new internet Web-address extension known as .travel.

For a coach operator or other travel industry company to adopt a Web name with a .travel extension, it must be "authenticated" by a recognized trade association that is working with the organization that is pushing the .travel program for the travel industry.

Those behind the effort say the internet visibility of travel-related companies will be increased by virtue of the industry having its own Web-address extension.

So, instead of (or in addition to) having a Web address that ends in .com or .net, a motorcoach or other travel company can also have an internet address that ends in .travel.

Members of the United Motorcoach Association, American Bus Association, and the National Tour Association are among the first companies allowed to reserve a Web name with a .travel extension. The associations are helping handle the reservation process and the initial step is the pre-authentication phase.

Unlike other domain names ending in .com or .net, .travel domains will be available only to travel companies and organizations that prove they are bona fide members of the travel industry.

As a service to members, UMA, ABA and NTA began handling pre-authentication requests this month. This process is expected to last 60 days.

Then, a .travel name will be available for purchase by associa-

tion members that have been pre-authenticated. This "limited launch" is expected to last from Sept. 1 through Nov. 30.

The pre-authentication period benefits association members because on Dec. 1, any company or organization can apply for a .travel name as long as it can be verified as being in the travel industry.

Coach operators interested in signing up for a .travel domain name should call or visit the Web site of the association they are a member of and request or look for the .travel information.

Companies can pre-authenticate their business name, service mark, trade mark, acronyms, doing-business-as name, marketing slogan, or current Web address.

Once a company has been pre-authenticated by an association, an e-mail confirmation will be sent containing a "unique identifying number," which proves that a company has been pre-authenticated and is eligible to purchase a .travel domain name.

Companies can then visit the Web site of a domain name registrar that is approved by .travel to research the name it wants and to purchase it. There will be two or three online registrars approved to sell .travel domain names.

On the registrar's Web site, companies will be able to select the name or names they want, enter appropriate contact information, provide name selection data and wait online. The registrar will check the information provided against the pre-authentication data entered through the company's association to determine if the name requested complies with the .travel naming rules. This all is expected to happen within seconds.

Q&A for ABA/UMA consolidation

The pending consolidation of the United Motorcoach Association and the American Bus Association has resulted in plenty of questions — and some confusion — among members of both organizations.

Like, what's the status of my membership?

"Do I renew my membership, or just wait until the organizations complete their unification?"

"I understand the combined association may have a different dues structure. How much do I pay now when I renew my membership?"

"Can member benefits from one association be enjoyed now by members of the other association?"

"Since the consolidation vote was announced in May, there have been a number of questions as to the status of membership, how to pay dues and so on," said Tara Sheehan, membership and marketing manager at UMA. "To clear up any confusion, we've developed responses based on updated information from the Transition Committee."

Here's a sampling of common questions and answers:

Question: If I belong to ABA or UMA, am I also now a member of the other organization? In other words, am I now a member of both ABA and UMA?

Answer: No. Even though both memberships have approved consolidation, the associations remain separate organizations, and their transition to a single group will stretch over a period of months. Meanwhile, until the unification is officially complete, all members are encouraged to continue to pay their regular dues.

For those companies that are members of one association but not both, and continue to pay their

regular dues, they will automatically be eligible for membership in the consolidated organization.

After the combined association begins business, members will renew their memberships at the new dues structure to be adopted by the combined association.

For those companies that currently are members of both associations, they also should renew their memberships as normal but they will be issued a refund for one of their memberships once consolidation is complete.

Question: Can I choose to not renew my membership and join again once the new organization is formed?

'The structure is designed to equally represent all factions of the industry.'

Answer: A company can do that but it will miss out on all of the membership benefits the associations provide in the meantime.

Membership input is critically important — now more than ever — during the transition phase. Members will take an active role in naming the new organization and determining its direction.

Question: Will UMA's Motorcoach Expo and ABA's Marketplace now be held together?

Answer: As of today, the earliest the two events can be combined or held simultaneously is 2008.

Question: Who will be the chief executive of the new organization?

Answer: A six-member Search Committee, comprised of mem-

bers from the ABA and UMA boards, has initiated a CEO search for the new organization. The current CEOs of UMA and ABA will be considered for the position.

Question: Where will the new organization be headquartered?

Answer: New office space is being considered in both Washington, D.C., and Alexandria, Va. The Transition Committee will ultimately decide the new location.

Question: When will the new organization be up and running?

Answer: Ideally, by the end of the year. However, the transition process is challenging, complicated and time consuming. It could take longer than six months. The two organizations will operate separately until the transition is officially completed, cooperating and sharing information along the way.

Question: Will smaller charter and tour companies be adequately represented on the board of directors of the combined organization?

Answer: The board of the new organization will be 32 members and it will be comprised of:

- Seven large charter and tour company members (20 or more coaches)
- Seven small charter and tour company members (19 or fewer coaches)
- Seven line-haul carrier members
- Four tour-operator members
- Two manufacturer members
- Two associate members
- Three travel members

The creation of this structure is designed to equally represent all factions of the industry that ABA and UMA currently represent.

UMA and ABA members with other questions should call either association: Call ABA at (800) 283-2877, or UMA at (800) 424-8262.

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Maple City Bus Bash attracts attendees from near, far

HORNELL, N.Y. — Scores of bus owners — from Florida to Ontario — brought their coaches to this small western New York community early this summer for the 47th Bus Bash, a gathering of bus aficionados that has been conducted twice annually for nearly 25 years.

The Maple City Bus Bash was hosted by Covered Wagon Tours, a charter bus company based in Hornell (population about 10,000). Bus Bash is sponsored by *National Bus Trader* magazine and a variety of industry suppliers and vendors.

Five years ago, Covered Wagon Tours and its president, David Parmley, hosted a Bus Bash in Hornell, making this year's event a return engagement. "We lost track of the number of compliments paid to Covered Wagon Tours for this Bus Bash," said National Bus Trader Publisher Larry Plachno. "Both Dave (Parmley) and Sandi (Koseba of the Covered Wagon Tours' staff) deserve a pat on the back for doing the seemingly impossible . . . improving on their earlier Bus Bash."

This year's activities included visits to the Alstom Transport rail car manufacturing and rebuilding facility; Silk Road Transport, a trucking company that specializes in hauling oversized loads, including giant rail cars and buses, and the Corning Museum of Glass, plus a dinner boat ride and a wine tasting. A group of vintners, known as the Finger Lakes Wineries, are a major tourist attraction in the Hornell area.

And, of course, there were displays of coaches, tours of buses, a parade of buses, and a flea market of bus collectibles.

The city of Hornell supported the gathering by providing a luncheon for participants and allowing the use of a community parking lot for the Sunday bus display. The show included antique, modern, converted and newly manufactured demonstrator coaches.

Major support for the bash came from ABC/Van Hool, MCI, Prevost Car and Setra of North America, all of which supplied demonstrator coaches and drivers to assist with shuttles and tours. A



Setra S 417, driven by Darril King, and a Van Hool C2045L, driven by Dave Millhouser, provided transportation for a fam tour of the area. And an MCI E4500 LX, outfitted with a luxury interior by Amadas and driven by Randy Wilcox, and a new Prevost H3-45 driven by Bill Nasos, transported participants for a tour of Alstom and other stops.

The coaches on display at the show ranged from a 1961 Eagle 01 and a 1965 General Motors PD4106, to a new Blue Bird Express 4500. Between those book-ends were a variety of coaches and midsize buses.

Among the more noteworthy coaches were a 1987 MCI 102A3 with an executive interior owned by Peter Pan Bus Lines of Springfield,

Mass.; a 1991 Neoplan Spaceliner conversion coach owned by a couple from St. Cloud, Fla.; a 2000 E4500 that originally was converted by Custom Coach for Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's and known as the Biggie Bus, and now owned by former Blue Bird Coach Lines owner Louis Magnano, and a 1990 Prevost LeMirage owned by Michaud Bus Sales.

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Partners Marcello Machado, C.W. Newman

Express Transportation Orlando

Express Transportation has taken delivery of the last of five Van Hool C2045 coaches that it ordered in the fall.

The newest 2005 model C2045 is equipped with a Caterpillar C13 engine, ZF AS-tronic transmission and Jake Brake. Other specified equipment includes Amaya Guadi passenger seats, Alcoa wheels, Firestone tires, Monogram flush-type recirculating toilet with supplemental restroom tank, REI A/V system with monitors, DVD player and radio, and Isringhausen driver seat.

The first four C2045s, delivered in December, were equipped with Cummins ISM engines and Allison B500 transmissions.

"The Van Hool is a dependable motorcoach and projects the kind of image we want to present to our customers," said C.W. Newman, a partner in the company. "The C2000 is simple to operate and maintain and has been a workhorse for us," Newman added.

Express Transportation offers both local and national charters,

shuttle services for conventions, airport transfers and school activity trips.

"You are as likely to see our coaches in Quebec or Los Angeles as you are in Orlando — even though we are ranked as the No. 1 provider of over-the-road service in the Orlando area," said Newman. Fox Network chose Express to provide its corporate transportation during Super Bowl XXXIX earlier this year in Jacksonville, Fla.

Company partners, Marcello Machado and Newman, began the business 12 years ago. Five years ago, they made a decision to grow the company and have done just that.

Their modern fleet now totals 28 late-model coaches. About half the fleet is Van Hools but the goal is to be three-quarters Van Hool within a short time. "We have a long-standing relationship with Claude Payne, our ABC account manager. We trust him and I think we've purchased almost every coach in our fleet through him," Newman noted.

Kewl Tours Walkersville, Md.

Kewl Tours and Charters has taken delivery of a new Prevost H3-45 coach. Three of the company's five full-size motorcoaches are Prevosts, and the family-owned and -operated company is moving to an all-Prevost fleet.

"Prevost is without a doubt the best touring coach on the market. Nothing compares to it," says David Burke, general manager of Kewl Tours and Charters. "We've looked at other coaches but the quality at Prevost is far superior. It has curb appeal, comfort and visibility for the customer, and a very high level of proven technology. The H3-45 fits the bill."

The entire Burke family is involved in their motorcoach tour-and-charter company and airport transportation service. They add their own special touches to their tours, like scheduling stops in



places off the beaten path.

Celebrating its fifth anniversary this year, Kewl offers day trips to New York City and Atlantic City, as well as two- to five-day trips to New England, the East Coast, and the Midwest, and longer cross-country excursions. The company also organizes student transportation to popular destinations.

"We have a pretty loyal following," says Burke. "There are some people who have not missed a single one of our western trips."

Besides its motorcoaches, the company also operates a midsize bus, vans and sedans.

Kewl Tours' newest Prevost is equipped with a Detroit Diesel Series 60 engine, ZF AS-tronic transmission, Jake Brake, Alcoa wheels, Michelin tires, REI A/V system with four monitors, National Model 4210 passenger seats, Isringhausen driver seat, Taraflex flooring, and Ricon wheelchair lift.

For more information go to www.kewlinc.com.

Lone Star Coaches Grand Prairie, Texas

Lone Star Coaches has taken delivery of two MCI J4500 motorcoaches.

The new coaches are the first J models for Lone Star, which operates a fleet of 16 buses.

"The MCI J4500 was attractive to us," said company president Mark Steelman. He is the second generation of his family to lead the company. "We like its design, spiral entryway, luggage capacity and overall appeal."

Lone Star's new J4500 coaches are each equipped with Caterpillar C13 engines, ZF AS-tronic trans-

missions, Amaya passenger seats, REI flat-screen monitors and DVD entertainment systems. They also have Ricon wheelchair lifts.

The coaches will primarily be used for Lone Star's contract service with Amtrak, transporting passengers from Amtrak's Longview and Houston stations. They also will supplement Lone Star's tour-and-charter operations, which account for nearly 85 percent of the company business.

Founded in 1979, Lone Star provides contract bus services for schools, universities and airport

transport, and it operates throughout the continental U.S. with its tour-and-charter operations. Lone Star has its own service facility, and none of the coaches in its fleet are older than 1998.

"With a newer fleet, we have fewer road failures, reducing our need for mechanical personnel and providing our customers with the very best. We like to put all the bells and whistles on our coaches," said Steelman. "We look for reliable equipment that doesn't need much repair, and that's why we went with the J4500."

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

Croswell

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

their charters.

"It really put us in a bad light," says Croswell, adding that he could have gotten out of the deal but felt an obligation to the people who had put down money and were counting on taking their charter trips. "We didn't want to go into a new market and be considered evil, so we assumed it all."

How could a businessman, who has a strong reputation for running a solid motorcoach business, be blindsided by the mess at West Virginia Coach? Croswell points to himself, saying he just didn't take a deep enough look into the Huntington operation before jumping in.

"We really didn't have access to the records because they were in such disarray," he says, noting he was aware some advances probably had been spent, but never realized it was such a substantial amount. He

says he figured that a portion of the deposits — \$30,000 to \$40,000, he guessed — had been used to pay the bookings for at least some of the upcoming trips, which is why he was willing to pay \$35,000 for the business.

Croswell says he probably could have avoided the financial hit and headaches that came with it had he pushed for the extensive due-diligence investigation he knows good business people need to do before making such an investment.

He suggests, too, that when potential buyers look into acquiring a troubled motorcoach company, they should realize that the problems most likely did not develop simply because the business ran out of money or had a decline in sales or had gotten behind in equipment payments or lost its insurance coverage or any number of single difficulties.

"When a company fails, it fails across the system and you have to

be aware of that and look for what happened," he says.

"(The Croswells) walked into a mess and not only did what was right but went way beyond," notes Steve Klika, president of the International Motor Coach Group, which counts Croswell Bus Lines as a member. "What started as a simple purchase of assets of a bankrupt company turned ugly... Talk about a no win situation. At least one would think."

But the Croswells "'stepped well above the plate' and engaged themselves with the customers — versus standing back. Talk about a new customer loyalty program... Yes, unexpected money was paid but I'm optimistic it will come back threefold," Klika adds.

Meantime, Croswell is busy working off the 166 charters that West Virginia Coach had booked before he took over. He's moved some of his coaches into Huntington and is making plans to



purchase new coaches to keep up with the business.

And, he's building goodwill at the same time.

"We've gotten extremely good press for what we're doing and it makes us feel really good that we can help people out like this," he says.

He's also building a collection of thank you cards and letters from customers who are aware of what Croswell has done and is doing. Among them is one from a parent whose child's class went on a two-

day trip for its graduation from sixth grade and who could not have raised money to replace its missing deposit. "I thank God that I could share that with them and that you helped make it happen," she wrote of the trip.

Croswell estimates it will take him at least 18 months before he digs himself out of the red with the Huntington operation. Still, he's looking at the bright side.

"It has been an experience that has made us stronger and wiser," he says.



Endeavor Bus Miami, Fla.

Endeavor Bus Lines, which also operates under the name South Florida Trailways, has taken delivery of its second 2005 Van Hool C2045 this year.

The new coach displays Endeavor's signature graphics, as well as the Trailways logo and name.

Based in Miami, Endeavor is a regional provider of ground transportation for airlines, cruise lines, major tour operators and professional sports teams. In addition, the company offers long-distance sightseeing tour and charter services.

Company president Mike Amador said that "working with the ABC family has been great and Jim Morrison has been awesome to deal with. I choose the Van Hool coach because of Van

Hool's integrity in building the coach, as well as its European styling. Overall it's a very comfortable coach for my passengers and user friendly for my drivers and maintenance personnel."

The new C2045 is equipped with the Caterpillar C13 engine with ACERT® technology and Allison B500 transmission with retarder. Other equipment includes Amaya Brasil seats, Alcoa wheels, Goodyear tires, Monogram flush-type recirculating toilet with supplemental restroom tank, REI A/V system with DVD player, radio, PA system with cordless microphone and four CRT monitors.

A C2045 delivered to Endeavor in March was equipped with a Detroit Diesel Series 60 engine.



AZ Bus Tours Toronto

AZ Bus Tours has expanded its 35-coach, all-Prevost fleet with the addition of five new H3-45s.

Company general manager Bill Eliopoulos said AZ Bus Tours wants Prevosts for its medium-sized luxury coach operation because "we have big expectations of our fleet. We offer premium service and we want something that won't let us down. The bottom line, we need premium equipment."

Established seven years ago, AZ Bus Tours is a charter operator offering a broad range of services, including sightseeing tours in Canada, full-service tours in the United States, airport transfers and shuttle services. It is a major casino transportation company, with daily

line-runs that send a steady stream of coaches to and from Casino Rama, which is about 90 minutes from Toronto.

Because its coaches make daily runs, Eliopoulos said the company "simply can't have downtime. We need to get the coaches on the road, which we can do with the quick-and-easy servicing of Prevost coaches."

AZ Bus Tours' new Prevosts are equipped with Detroit Diesel Series 60 engines, Allison B500 transmissions, Jake Brakes, Prevost Turismo passenger seats, Isringhausen driver seats, Firestone tires, REI A/V system with three monitors and DVD/VCR players, and Xenon front headlights.

N.E. parts outlet opened by MCI

EAST BRUNSWICK, N.J. — Motor Coach Industries has opened a 50,000-square-foot parts distribution center here to better serve customers in the northeastern U.S.

The Fleet Support location will inventory the 500 most-popular parts listed in the company's Fast or Free Parts Guarantee program and other frequently requested parts for MCI D-Series, E4500 and J4500 coach models.

The facility is off the New Jersey Turnpike at Exit 9, at 35 Cotters Lane, East Brunswick.

"MCI has a high concentration of customers in the Northeast," said Scot Moir, director of marketing for MCI Fleet Support. "By opening this location, customers can be assured of quick access to important parts."

Customers may pick up parts from the East Brunswick facility. To pick up a part, customers are required to phone in their order, which will be available usually within two hours.

In addition, MCI has dedicated more than 25,000 square feet at its Los Alamitos, Calif., sales and service branch to parts inventory.

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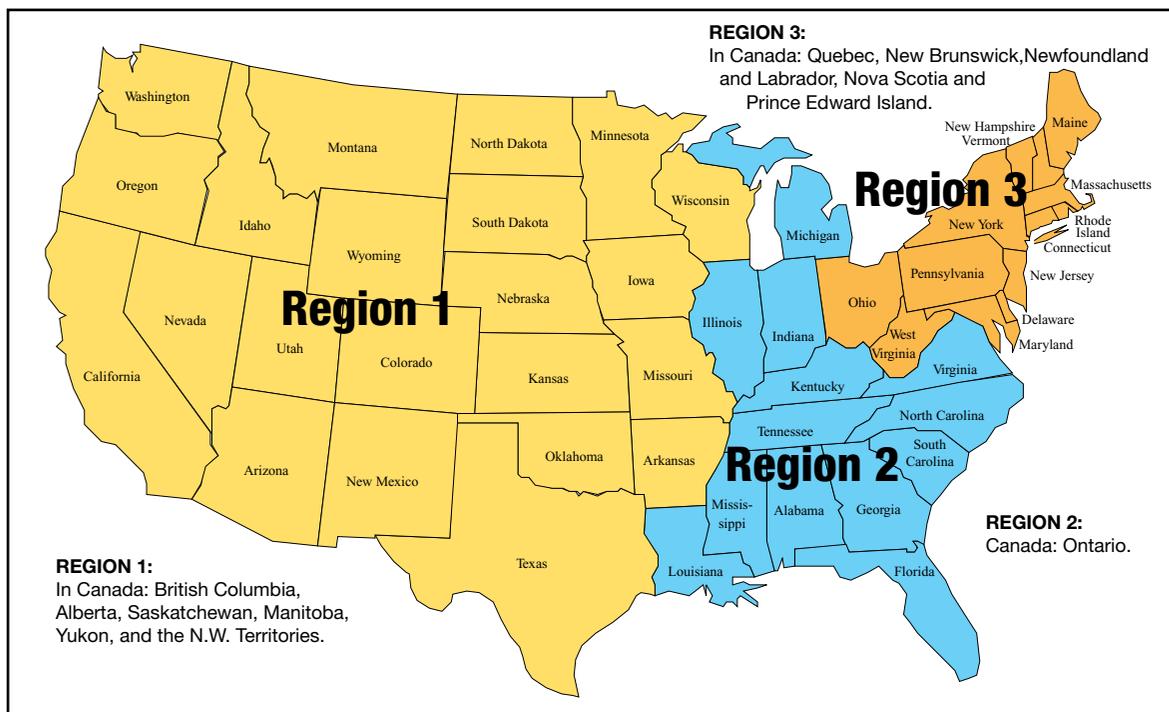
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UMA sets board election for fall

WASHINGTON — The United Motorcoach Association is seeking nominations from among its members to fill a half-dozen, three-year elected seats on its board of directors.

Sept. 1 is the deadline for letters of nomination for the director positions on UMA's board.

Two directors will be elected from each of UMA's three membership regions for three-year terms. (See accompanying map.)

The election is occurring even though UMA members have voted to join their organization with the American Bus Association. Until the consolidation is completed, the association must continue to fulfill the requirements of its bylaws, including electing new directors. The directors elected this fall will automatically have seats on the combined ABA-UMA board of directors once unification occurs.

All of the UMA director seats to be contested this year are the result of expiring terms of incumbent regional coach-operator directors, who may seek re-election.

The directors whose seats are expiring this year are: Region I

(The West): Daryl Johnson, J & J Charters of Crosby, Texas, and Tom Ready, Ready Bus Lines of La Crescent, Minn.; Region II (The Midwest): Bob Hume, Travel Mates of Virginia in Harrisonburg, Va., and Ralph Young, Young Transportation of Ashville, N.C., and Region III (The Northeast): Joan Libby, Cavalier Coach in Boston, and Godfrey Lebron, Paradise Trailways in West Hempstead, N.Y.

UMA's board has 20 members, 18 regional directors who must be coach operators and who are elected to three-year staggered terms. In addition, it has one non-coach-builder associate representative who serves a three-year term, and one coachbuilder associate who also serves a three-year term. Only seats of regional directors are expiring this year.

Qualification standards for UMA directors can be found in Article VI of the UMA Bylaws printed in the back of the *UMA Membership Directory*.

Nominations for the regional board directorships must come from active UMA members who are motorcoach operators. Candi-

dates nominated for the board must represent an active UMA-member company in good standing. Directors serve without pay, but the association generally reimburses directors for travel and accommodations while performing UMA business and/or attending committee meetings and the mid-year board meeting.

Written letters of nomination must state the candidate's name, company affiliation and home-base location. Nomination letters also must be postmarked no later than Sept. 1, 2005. Regional UMA Nominating Committees will certify the eligibility of all candidates to produce a list of nominees in each region no later than Oct. 1.

Ballots will be mailed to UMA members by Oct. 15, and must be returned no later than Nov. 15. Winners will be announced in the Dec. 1 issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.

Any UMA member with questions about nominations should contact the association at (800) 424-8262. Mail nomination letters to: UMA Nominations, 113 S. West St., 4th Floor, Alexandria, VA 22314-2824.

Safety/security seminar planned by UMA

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The United Motorcoach Association is planning to reprise the successful safety and security seminar it conducted late last year.

The 2005 version will be Dec. 13 and 14 and will be designed for managers and owners of motorcoach operations, as well as coach company safety and security directors.

The seminar will again take place at the training facility of the National Transportation Safety Board in Ashburn, Va.

The program this year is expect-

ed to build on last year's agenda. For one thing, that means that those who attended the "basic" track last year will have an opportunity to attend the experienced or advanced program this year.

"This new seminar will present the kind of comprehensive and useful information that will help attendees better manage the safety aspects of their fleets and operations," said Victor Parra, president and CEO of UMA.

The program is being developed under the direction of Brian Scott of

Escot Bus Lines in Largo, Fla., who is vice chairman of UMA and chairman of the association's risk management committee.

The seminar will involve two full days of classroom presentations. Each day will begin at 8 a.m. and conclude at 5 p.m. There will be an hour for lunch and half-hour breaks during the morning and afternoon sessions.

Registration is expected to begin later this summer. Watch *Bus & Motorcoach News* and on UMA's Web site.

Motorcoach Expo 2006 is taking shape in Tampa

TAMPA, Fla. — Plans are taking shape for Motorcoach Expo 2006, set in exciting Tampa and Tampa Bay, Fla., with an expanded display floor, redesigned education sessions and relaxed networking events designed to make the show both valuable and memorable.

The '06 Expo comes earlier in the year than the last three shows, with events kicking off Jan. 18, and concluding Jan. 22. Expo was in late February this year.

Most of next year's activities will be at the Tampa Bay Convention Center, a recently expanded meeting hall that offers more than 2,000 feet of Tampa Bay waterfront views. The center is convenient and within walking distance of hotels, restaurants and clubs.

So, after a day of seminars or traversing the Expo show floor, attendees can visit such popular attractions as Ybor City, Channel-side (movie theaters, restaurants, shops and nightclubs) or the Florida Aquarium.

The theme of Expo 2006, *Finding Your Own Path*, builds on the 2005 Expo focus of *Building a Strong Foundation*. Presenters and speakers will encourage and educate attendees about the value of smart planning for their businesses. The sessions will highlight ways to be successful in your unique market or markets.

"No two companies are identical, and the same methods for success that work for one may not work for another," said UMA President and CEO Victor Parra. "Expo education sessions are being specially designed with the purpose of helping companies consider their unique market position and plan for a successful future accordingly."

Sessions are being designed to help operators develop and better

manage the various segments that make up their businesses — operations, marketing, financing and other key areas. New topics will help companies identify business opportunities, learn to implement a fuel surcharge, try easy-to-use market research techniques, and develop and market packaged travel.

Special sessions will deal specifically with small operator issues.

On the expanded display floor, an outgrowth of this year's very successful Expo in Las Vegas, attendees will find more new and unique exhibits, plus new midsize and school bus exhibitors. As always, there will be the basic equipment and services operators need to run their businesses successfully.

Tampa was specially chosen for Expo 2006 because of its location, weather and activities. Tampa presents visitors with the best of Florida in one location. Its attractions include the renowned Busch Gardens theme park, and historic Ybor City, the former cigar-making capital of the world where the tradition of hand-rolled cigars continues but visitors also can enjoy Cuban sandwiches that are hot and crisp. Oh, yes, Tampa also claims to have the most succulent seafood anywhere. Plus, Orlando is only 80 miles away.

Registration for Expo 2006 is already underway. Early bird rates save registrants up to 45 percent. However, rates increase Aug. 15.

Register online at www.motorcoachexpo.com, or by mailing or faxing a registration form to the United Motorcoach Association. Forms can be found at www.motorcoachexpo.com/pdf/WebRegistrationForm.pdf. Or, call UMA at (800) 424-8262 for a form or more information.

People

Mary M. Kapferer has been named the principal accounting officer of **National Interstate Corp.** Kapferer, 39, joined the company in April as an assistant vice president and chief accounting officer. She came to National Interstate from Charter One Bank where she served as a senior vice president and chief internal auditor for the past three years.

Maxon Mobility of Santa Fe Springs, Calif., announced that

Greg Smith has joined its mobility division as district sales representative for the western region. Smith joined Maxon Mobility in May, and has 10 years of industry experience. He most recently was a sales representative for Boerner Truck Center.

Maxon, which has been manufacturing wheelchair lifts for five years, says it is the fastest growing manufacturer in the mobility lift industry.

A must: Make sure your lavatory has pizzaz

By Bryan Couch
Motor Coach Industries

Passengers typically don't give motorcoach lavatories much thought — unless they have a reason to complain.

In *Customers for Life*, author Carl Sewel points out that bus passengers will often think, "if that's how they will take care of their restroom, how will they take care of me?"

Knowing this, many operators take great pride in having a well-maintained restroom. And there's no excuse not to.

That's because it's easy to keep the paper stocked, the lock working, and even the mirror clean. And new products, such as hand-wipes and hand sanitizers from Celeste, offer good quality and utility for passengers.

But increased lavatory use during the summer season also calls for increased mechanical maintenance.

Rule No. 1 is to always observe local ordinances when dumping. Following the tips below will result in a clean, well-maintained lavatory.

Flush waste-storage tanks after dumping. Drain the waste-holding tank by opening the dump valve (slide). Flush to release the solution in the pump. Close the dump valve. Attach a fresh water (ideally warm or hot) hose to charge the tank, and flush two or three times to circulate and rinse. Repeat the dump-and-rinse cycle until waste water runs clear.

Obstructions can sometimes be cleared by 'cycling' the dump valve a few times. If necessary, the cleanout plug should be removed for clearing the dump valve. A solution of one-third pint (.5 liter) disinfectant should be used for the final rinse.

Follow the instructions listed in your coach maintenance manual and refill the tank with fresh water/chemical solution to the fill mark. Flush the lavatory a few times to circulate the solution and fill the pump. Recheck the fluid level; top off if necessary.

Fresh water storage tanks (if equipped) should be inspected and cleaned and disinfected as needed.

* * *

The lavatory ventilation system should be inspected and serviced as needed. This ventilation system draws air from the lavatory into the engine's air intake system while the engine is running. Inspect the air hose for splits or tears. Breaks in the air-routing hose will reduce fresh-air flow through the lavatory and can allow unfiltered air to enter

the engine inlet box.

Some coaches use a 24-volt fan to ventilate the lavatory. With the ignition key in the 'ACC' or 'RUN' position, the fan is powered and discharges stale air from the lavatory area into the engine air

intake system.

* * *

Inspect the sink drains (if equipped), which may hold water and allow odors to re-enter the coach.

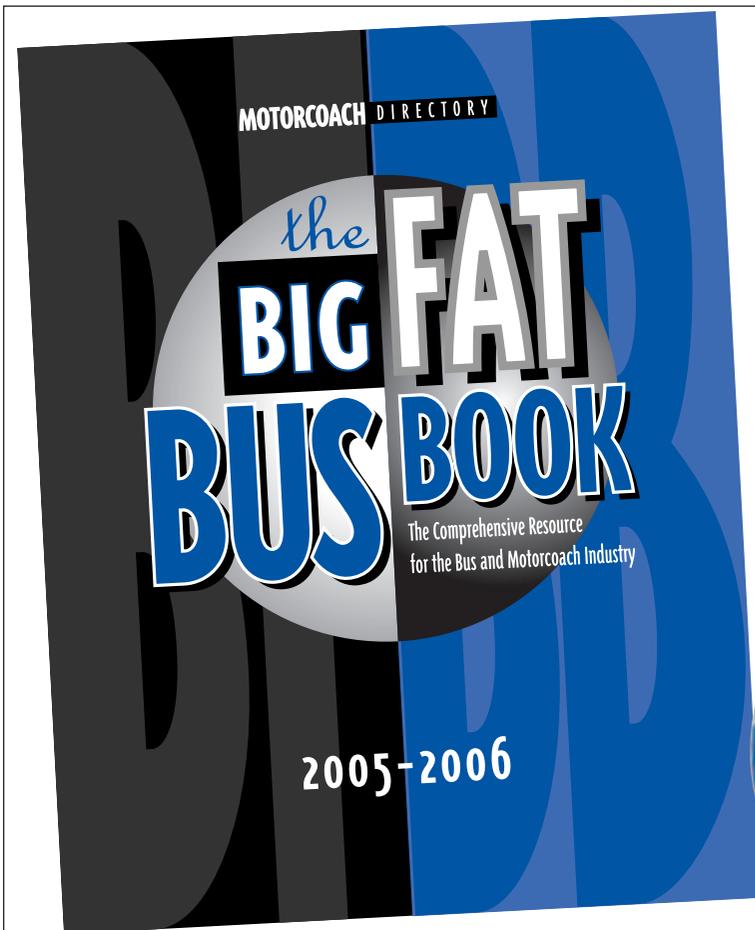
MCI always recommends consulting

the maintenance manual for detailed troubleshooting information on your particular lavatory system.

Bryan Couch is vice president of product development and technical support at MCI.



Bryan Couch



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Big expansion for Prevest service center in Nashville

WHITES CREEK, Tenn. — Prevest Car has substantially expanded its parts and service center in suburban Nashville.

Prevest said the steady growth in recent years of the seated coach and entertainer bus shell markets contributed to the decision to expand.

The expansion includes 2 new service bays and 22 additional coach parking places. The facility now has a total of 7 service bays and 41 parking places.

To accommodate the growth, Prevest purchased an additional acre of land from the adjoining property owner. The added space provides ample room for coaches to maneuver, plus there are more electrical hookups available for conversion coach owners seeking overnight service and repairs. The wash bay also has been completely renovated and updated.

Employees have been hired to staff the expanded center, including a 30 percent increase in service

technicians and additional office workers to answer customer questions and process work orders rapidly.

A key feature of the facility is a security system that provides customers access to a completely fenced property using a keypad-controlled gate. Amenities include a customer lounge with satellite television, restroom and laundry facilities.

Gilles Dion, Prevest vice president of parts, service and U.S. subsidiary, said the expanded facility will allow the company to meet increased demand, as well as better serve customers.

"We at Prevest are extremely

proud of our parts and service centers, and we do everything possible to ensure maximum customer satisfaction. That's why we are pleased to announce the expansion of our center in Nashville," he said.

The center offers a wide variety of services to coach, motorhome and bus owners of all makes and models. Its shop capabilities range from routine maintenance and mechanical repairs, to cosmetic upgrades and major accident repairs, including frame straightening.

Lonnie Mackeprang is manager of the Nashville facility. An open house is being planned to celebrate the expansion.



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Rochette

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

to introducing new products to the market.

"Timing is the key in product introduction, and we always had great timing," he says.

Prevest was the first — in 1984 — to introduce the 102-inch wide coach and a year later brought out a 60-foot articulated coach, both of which were popular and big sellers. It also perfected frameless windows, giving passengers a more expansive view.

Additionally, Prevest was among the first to recognize the need for "curb appeal" for motorcoaches and began tweaking its buses regularly to improve their appearance.

When Rochette joined Prevest, he was the company's first true marketing professional. He modernized company marketing practices by implementing professional tools and developing strategies, including those that branded and positioned the company in the mar-

ketplace. Many successful company events and product launches bear his imprint and attest to his talent as an event organizer.

Rochette is a graduate of St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, with a degree in business administration. He began his professional career at DuPont Canada and then moved on to Hudson's Bay Company before joining Bombardier.

While the industry has seen plenty of changes over the years, Rochette says the most significant one during the past quarter century occurred the year before he joined Prevest — government deregulation in 1982.

"The whole scene changed with deregulation," he says, adding that it opened up the market for bus manufacturers that had been stymied by the big line haulers of Greyhound and Trailways, which controlled about 80 percent of the market and owned their own coach manufacturing companies.

After deregulation, the tour-and-charter business soared. Hundreds of new operators joined the industry and the tour-and-charter market share jumped from 20 percent to close to 80 percent. Prevest took advantage of the opening in the years immediately following deregulation and went on a major growth surge.

Rochette said federal legislation that allowed coaches to expand from 35 to 40 feet, and then to 45 feet, and to widen from 96 inches to 102 inches also played important roles in improving the industry. "Motorcoach carriers were able to increase their loads, which reduced their operating costs at the same time," he noted.

An industry disappointment, he says, came in the 1990s when bus manufacturers and financing institutions made it far easier to purchase new coaches than in the past. Their strategy led to the opening of more and more motorcoach companies, which produced wide-open competition and led many small

operators to undercharge to gain business from established carriers.

"When you have a whole bunch of people that all of sudden enter the industry and start cutting prices left and right it is extremely difficult to maintain the type of operation you want to maintain," Rochette said.

The problem worsened when the industry hit a soft spot in 2000 and the 9/11 disaster of 2001. The troubled times led to lenders repossess large numbers of coaches, which helped cause a flood of used buses and a deep decline in their value. "It became extremely difficult to upgrade your product and buy new when you couldn't get a fair price for the coaches you would like to trade in," says Rochette.

"Certain competitors did not react quickly enough in facing those issues and slowing production with the downturn in business," he contends.

Prevest, he says, managed to weather the financial storm better than others because it had diversified into bus shells. He said that segment of the industry — Prevest holds about 90 percent of the market share in North America — did not experience the severe downturn that hit the seated-coach market. That left Prevest in a much stronger position than manufacturers that depend almost solely on seated-coach sales, he said.

While Rochette soon will be able to put all of the ups and downs of the industry behind him, he's not likely to do so. After retirement, he said, he still intends to remain involved in the industry in some manner, possibly in some other area of the industry, plus he will continue to attend some customer activities organized by Prevest.

"I certainly see myself remaining associated with the industry but I am 100 percent loyal to Prevest, and would not in any way be against them. However, I may consider doing other venues or looking for other opportunities in the industry."

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JULY 2005

17-20 National School Transportation Association Convention and Annual Meeting, Renaissance Mayflower Hotel, Washington. Info: www.schooltrans.com.

21-22 National School Transportation Association Safety and Security Workshop, National Transportation Safety Board Academy, Ashburn Va. Info: (800) 222-6782.

21-23 National Motorcoach Network / Trailways Transportation System Network Invitational 100, Wyndham Riverfront Hotel, Little Rock, Ark. Info: (888) 733-5287 or www.motorcoach.com.

AUGUST 2005

11-12 Ultra Low Sulfur Diesel Fuel Technical Workshop, Milwaukee, Wis. Info: (407) 977-4500 or go to www.transitresourcecenter.com.

Motor Coach Canada sets B.C. meeting

VANCOUVER, B.C. — Motor Coach Canada will have its annual Connections West meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia, in late November.

For the first time ever, MCC will offer members not in attendance the opportunity to take part in the annual meeting by teleconferencing.

The Connections West meeting will be Nov. 20-22.

"We believe this will be our best conference to date," said Motor Coach Canada President Brian Crow. "We are working jointly with the Canadian Urban Transit Association, which is holding its annual conference at the same time, and we are partnering with CUTA once again to promote their Tradeshow — Transexpo."

Transexpo is a one-day tradeshow, Nov. 22, for transit and bus operators.

Connections West will have both social and business components. Business seminars will include a detailed review of the proposed Canadian hours-of-service regulations, trip inspection changes, and cross-border issues.

The conference will be at The Fairmont Waterfront Vancouver and Transexpo will be at the Vancouver Exhibition and Convention Centre.

For more information, contact Motor Coach Canada at (403) 210-1054; (506) 451-6400, or (416) 229-9305, or go to www.motorcoachcanada.com.

13-16 Alabama Motorcoach Association Annual Meeting and Marketplace, Embassy Suites, Montgomery, Ala. Info: (866) 376-7770 or www.alabama-motorcoach.org.

24-27 International Motorcoach Group Strategic Alliance Meeting, Lake Geneva, WI. Info:

(913) 906-0111 or www.imgcoach.com.

28-31 Motorcoach Association of South Carolina Annual Meeting and Marketplace, Pigeon Forge, Tenn. Info: (888) 376-1150 or go to www.scmotorcoach.org.

30-Sept. 1 Florida Motorcoach Association Appointment Show, Sheraton Sand Key Resort, Clearwater Beach, Fla. Info: (407) 647-2491 or www.florida-motorcoach.org.

SEPTEMBER 2005

7-9 Hawaii Transportation

Association Annual Conference, Waikiki Beach Marriott Resort, Honolulu. Info: Go to www.htahawaii.org.

9-13 Virginia Motorcoach Association Annual Meeting & Marketplace, Embassy Suites, Hampton, Va. Info: (434) 376-1150 or go to www.vamotorcoach.com.



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Preliminary Program Schedule

Wednesday, January 18, 2006

- ◆ State Association Summit (1:00PM - 5:00PM)
- ◆ Welcome Reception (6:00PM - 9:00PM)

Thursday, January 19, 2006

- ◆ UMA Active Member Meeting and Continental Breakfast (8:00AM)
- ◆ Maintenance Interchange (8:00AM - 4:00PM)
- ◆ Education Sessions (9:00AM - 4:15PM)
- ◆ Operator Luncheon
- ◆ Exhibit Hall Open – "Sneak Preview" (4:30PM - 7:30PM)

Friday, January 20, 2006

- ◆ Education Sessions (8:00AM - 10:30AM)
- ◆ Exhibit Hall Open (10:30AM - 5:30PM)
- ◆ Lunch on Exhibit Floor
- ◆ Vision Awards Banquet (6:30PM - 11:00PM)

Saturday, January 21, 2006

- ◆ Exhibit Hall Open (9:00AM - 12:00PM)
- ◆ Brunch on Exhibit Floor

Sunday, January 22, 2006

- ◆ 2nd Annual Ray Dupuis Memorial Golf Tournament (8:00AM)



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