

## Community involvement pays off for coach operators

From loaning buses and drivers to transport Alzheimer patients on excursions, to extensive support of the March of Dimes, Godfrey LeBron has put considerable effort into his community – and reaped the benefits.

“It’s not just about money; but it does bring you money,” says LeBron, who is co-owner of Paradise Trailways in Hicksville, N.Y.

“(Community involvement is) a form of networking. People tend to gravitate toward people involved in charities. It makes people more comfortable with you,” says LeBron, who also is chairman of the United Motorcoach Association.

Across the U.S., coach operators report they are enhancing their financial success by increasing involvement in their communities.

“When you’re a leader in your community you get sought after,” says Ron Eyre, president of Eyre Bus, Tour & Travel in Glenelg, Md. “People come to me. When you become a community advocate, it puts you out there as a viable leader,” adds Eyre.

“Every organization that I networked in, I got business. And they referred others. There’s no percent-

age (of business earned), but it was significant. It’s really sales and marketing 101. Instead of advertising, go out personally,” urges Eyre.

Today, Eyre’s son Matthew carries the community mantle for their three-generation company, although the senior Eyre continues to do his part.

“You are networking with hundreds and hundreds of people. That

was really my job, to be the face of Eyre in the community.”

Eyre says that at the height of his community involvement, about 25 percent of his time went to the community, between monthly meetings and evening events he attended with his wife. Hospitals, a school, and tourism organizations all have benefited from his

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## Drivers perform worse in safety check this year

WASHINGTON — The out-of-service rate for motorcoaches inspected last month during Roadcheck 2008 was virtually unchanged from last year, but the number of drivers placed out of service increased by 18 percent, the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance reports.

During the three-day Roadcheck safety blitz, 12.2 percent of the motorcoaches inspected, were ordered off the road because of safety and mechanical problems.

Last year, the out-of-service for passenger buses was 12.3 percent, and in 2006 the rate was 9.2 percent.

The out-of-service rate for motorcoach drivers increased this year to 4.5 percent, an abnormally high rate for over-the-road bus drivers.

A year ago, 3.8 percent of the coach drivers stopped for a Roadcheck inspection were ordered out of their buses. In 2006, the percentage was 2.9.

The out-of-service rate for bus drivers has increased steadily during the past half-dozen years. When CVSA inspectors checked log books, CDLs, medical cards

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*megabus.com launched double-deck, curbside service out of New York City last month with an above-the-street ceremony on the marquee of the Hard Rock Café, formerly the Paramount Theater, on Broadway in Times Square.*

## megabus ‘ups’ the ante in N.E.

### Introduces first double-deckers

By Dave Millhouser

NEW YORK — New York Giants’ football great Michael Strahan helped megabus.com kick off the first East Coast, double-deck, line-run service here last month with a ceremony in Times Square.

Joined by Stagecoach Group Chief Executive Brian Souter and Coach USA President Dale Moser,

Strahan commented on the impressiveness of the double-deck coach, but the real thrust of his comments was on how “green” it is to travel by motorcoach. He noted that the 79-seat, double-deck Van Hool used only four pints of fuel per passenger on the New York-to-Washington trip.

Shortly after the ceremony, the coach departed for D.C., from megabus.com’s New York curbside location adjacent to Penn Station with 69 passengers, including Souter, Moser and Coach USA Senior Vice President Don Car-

michael. It arrived on time in D.C. after a brief stop in Baltimore.

megabus.com, which is owned by Coach USA, is the largest carrier in the U.S. specializing in express runs with curbside pickup. Patterned after a similar successful Stagecoach Group operation in the United Kingdom, it serves 30 U.S. and Canadian cities with a combination of double-deck and traditional coaches. Stagecoach Group is the corporate parent of Coach USA.

Carmichael said megabus

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## D.C. police citing buses along I-295

WASHINGTON — Motorcoach drivers who use a popular shortcut to reduce the time and distance it takes to bypass the District of Columbia might want to rethink their strategy.

It could save ‘em hundreds of dollars.

Police have begun ticketing buses along Interstate 295 for not having a District of Columbia-required trip permit — a citation that carries a \$500 fine.

The route is used by most motorcoach drivers traveling from Baltimore and the northeast, and from Richmond and the southeast, because it is much shorter than using the Interstate 495 beltway, which is outside the district.

Operators report that patrol officers are not only stopping coaches on I-295 that do not display the permit, but also are using cameras in cruisers parked along the roadway to catch violators.

Tickets are being issued, they say, even though the drivers are not planning to stop in the district and the part of I-295 used by the buses only cuts through a small section of the southeastern portion

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## Feds schedule new round of motorcoach crash tests

WASHINGTON — The second phase of a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration crash testing program for motorcoaches will get under way this month at a testing facility in Ohio.

Engineers plan to conduct nine separate sled tests so they can examine seat and seatbelt anchorage loads and the impact accidents have on belted and unbelted passengers seated in various locations on a full-size coach.

The tests are part of an extensive three-part study the NHTSA plans to use to address a long list of safety issues, ranging from the use of seatbelts on coaches to new design standards for coaches.

The sled tests follow crash and rollover testing the NHTSA did in December using five older model coaches — one more than originally planned — to study seatbelt anchorage loads and roof strengths. Those tests opened the three-phase program that early next year will add the final piece of the study, an extended testing of coach fires and their causes.

In this phase of the testing, en-

gineers at the Vehicle Research and Test Center in East Liberty, Ohio, will fit a crash sled with three rows of motorcoach seats with life-size dummies. They then will run nine separate crashes with the dummies seated in various configurations with some wearing lap belts, others wearing three-point restraints and a few unrestrained.

It was not known how long the testing will take or when the results would be available. In the first testing phase, preliminary results were released about a month after the tests were completed.

The NHTSA said the testing was running behind earlier schedules because of the need to collect a large amount of bus data and analyze it so more information could be fed into the testing process.

The flammability tests that will come next year will be geared toward studying how a motorcoach fire spreads into the passenger compartment, identifying interior material flammability, determining the feasibility of establishing requirements for fire-hardening or

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## Driver training money awarded, almost all goes for truck drivers

WASHINGTON — The federal government is doling out \$1 million to nine technical and community colleges across the U.S. for commercial driver license training programs, but only one recipient appears on the way toward establishing a curriculum for motorcoach drivers.

A second school says it's premature to talk about a bus driver program and the others are either focusing exclusively on over-the-road truck drivers or could not be reached for comment.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration announced last month it was awarding the \$1 million in grants to the schools to enhance classroom safety curriculums and behind-the-wheel training courses for students enrolled in commercial driver license training programs.

"Our nation relies on a workforce of well-trained, safety conscious, professional truck and bus drivers to move our economy," said FMCSA Administrator John H. Hill. "Through this grant program, we are helping provide the cadre of highly qualified commercial drivers that our nation needs. This is also an investment in individuals

and in communities seeking enriched economic opportunities for the future."

However, it's almost exclusively an investment in better truck drivers.

Eligible entities for the annual commercial motor vehicle grants include accredited public and private institutions of higher education, federally recognized Native American Tribal Governments, and city, county and state governments.

The CMV Operator Training Grant Program, which was established by Congress three years ago has two goals:

- To expand the number of CDL holders possessing enhanced operator safety training to help reduce the severity and number of crashes on U.S. roads involving commercial motor vehicles.

- To assist economically distressed regions of the country by providing workforce training opportunities for qualified individuals to become commercial motor vehicle operators.

Maricopa Community College in Glendale, Ariz., was awarded \$52,663, and is actively putting together plans for a program to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14 ▶

## MCI announces '09-model updates

SCHAUMBERG, Ill. — Motor Coach Industries has announced it will begin delivering 2009 coaches next month, with the new models offering more safety, entertainment, durability and performance features.

New for the '09 J4500 model will be an electronic stability control system and a "wide-ride" suspension; a reverse sensing system will be available on both the J4500 and E4500 models, and all models will have an upgraded Smartwave tire pressure monitoring system, more electronic, video and audio

component combinations and additional high-end entertainment options.

"New interior seating fabrics and LED center-aisle lighting, with soft start and fade, will create an upscale living-room ambience to which riders will respond," said Patricia Ziska, MCI vice president and chief customer officer.

Outside, MCI says it has improved panels and hinges to better take the wear, tear and harsh weather that come with motorcoach operations.

MCI says it conducted exten-

sive research, plus test-track and in-service testing on demonstrator coaches to develop its "wide-ride suspension" that features Koni front shocks and frequency-selective-damping rear shocks.

The research and track testing confirmed that the positioning of the shocks and upgraded hydraulic performance improve handling, cornering and crosswind control, the coach builder said.

To supplement the suspension modifications, MCI has added an electronic stability control system

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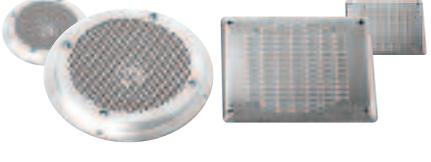
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# THE DOCKET

## Bill aims to put limit on state taxing

WASHINGTON — There's a new push in Washington to adopt legislation that would address the issue of overreaching state taxation of interstate businesses, especially small ones.

The latest proposed legislation is called the Business Activities Tax Simplification Act of 2008 (H.R. 5267). The legislation, which has appeared in similar forms in the last several sessions of Congress, is gaining support among Congressmen and Senators as the effects of more aggressive taxing efforts by states is made clear to them.

The bill would restrict states from imposing any general business tax on an interstate business that does not have strong physical contacts with that state.

In other words, it would solve the motor carrier industry's so-called "nexus" problems with states like New Jersey that stop and hold buses and trucks for ransom, and certain other states that claim many years of back taxes from carriers with very slight contacts.

There was a hearing late last

## State & Provincial Fuel Tax Rates

No states reduced fuel-tax rates during the past three months while six posted increases. Here are the updated rates for all states and provinces as of April 1, 2008

State	Gasoline	Diesel	State	Gasoline	Diesel
Alabama	16	19	North Carolina	29.9	29.9
Alaska	8	8	North Dakota	23	23
Arizona	18	26	Ohio	28	28
Arkansas	21.8	22.8	Oklahoma	16	13
California	48.84	36.6	Oregon	24	0
Colorado	22	20.5	Pennsylvania	31.2	38.1
Connecticut	43.9	37	Rhode Island	30	30
Delaware	23	22	South Carolina	16.75	16.75
Dist. of Columbia	20	20	South Dakota	24	24
Florida	20.67	31.07	Tennessee	21.4	18.4
Georgia	15.8	16.7	Texas	20	20
Hawaii	16	16	Utah	24.5	24.5
Idaho	25	25	Vermont	20	26
Illinois	34.3	37.5	Virginia	21.6	21.6
Indiana	29	27	Washington	36	36
Iowa	21.7	23.5	West Virginia	32.2	32.2
Kansas	24	26	Wisconsin	32.9	32.9
Kentucky	22.9	24.2	Wyoming	14	14
Louisiana	20	20	U. S.	18.4	24.4
Maine	29.28	29.32			
Maryland	23.5	24.25			
Massachusetts	21	21	<b>Province</b>	<b>Gasoline</b>	<b>Diesel</b>
Michigan	43.45	40.17	Alberta	9	9
Minnesota	22	22	British Columbia	14.5	15
Mississippi	18.4	18.4	Manitoba	11.5	11.5
Missouri	17	17	New Brunswick	10.7	16.9
Montana	27.75	28.5	Newfoundland	16.5	16.5
Nebraska	23.9	23.3	Nova Scotia	15.5	15.4
Nevada	23.81	27.81	Ontario	14.7	14.3
New Hampshire	20.625	20.625	Prince Edward Is.	15.8	20.2
New Jersey	14.5	17.5	Quebec	15.2	16.2
New Mexico	18.875	22.875	Saskatchewan	15	15
New York	38.4	36.65			

Tax Rate in U.S. is cents per gallon

Tax Rate in Canada = cents per liter

month on the bill that is being considered by the Subcommittee on

Commercial and Administrative Law in the U.S. House.

## Florida adopts idling limits

Tallahassee, Fla. — A Florida state environmental body has approved a five-minute idling limit for diesel vehicles weighing 8,500 pounds or more that closely resembles California's anti-idling regulations.

The Florida regulation goes into effect Dec. 15 and fines can be as much as \$1,000.

The Florida Environmental Regulation Commission unanimously approved the five-minute limit last month. The regulation would allow idling of longer than five minutes under the following exceptions:

- While stopped during traffic conditions over which the driver has no control

- To operate defrosters, heaters, air conditioners or other equipment "to prevent a safety or health emergency"

- To operate auxiliary equipment like a lift

One official with Florida's environmental department said education about the new idling limit will be more important than enforcement, initially.

"For the first year of implementation, our emphasis will be on what we call compliance assistance," said the official. "We want to help (commercial vehicle operators) understand that the rule is out there and give them time to learn about it."

## Missouri bill will mandate English-only tests for CDL

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — Gov. Matt Blunt is expected to sign a bill that would require new CDL applicants in Missouri to prove they have a firm grasp of the English language to obtain a commercial driver's license. (See May 1, 2007 and Feb. 1, 2008 issues of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Key provisions of the new law would require that the commercial driver's license written test to be offered only in English, and applicants would be required to understand traffic signs and signals written in English. They also would be prohibited from using translators while taking the test.

Supporters of the bill adopted by the state General Assembly say they are concerned that people are allowed to drive commercial vehicles on Missouri roads without a command of the English language.

They point out that federal safety regulations (391.11) state that applicants are required to:

"Read and speak the English language sufficiently to converse with the general public, to understand highway traffic signs and signals in the English language, to respond to official inquiries, and to make entries on reports and records..."

Opponents said that adopting the strict standards would push certain trucking companies to go "underground" by hiring people to sit behind the wheel of their vehicles.

Another provision in the bill would prohibit local governments from enacting policies that give sanctuary to illegal immigrants. State funding would be cut for localities that do not cooperate with federal officials trying to enforce immigration laws.

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## Colorado hikes fines in work zones

DENVER — Colorado Gov. Bill Ritter has signed a bill authorizing the use of speed cameras in highway work zones.

The new law also doubles fines in work zones when highway workers are on the job site. During such times, law enforcement can issue speeding tickets with fines between \$60 and \$540.

Photo radar vans could be deployed to snap pictures of speeders, leading to tickets. It's not clear, however, how soon the state will start using photo radar in work zones.

Once the enforcement tool is put into use, though, signs warning of photo radar will be required to be posted four hours before the start of highway work.

The Department of Public Safety will be authorized to contract with private vendors to operate the photo radar vans.

Other violations in work zones that could result in offenders paying double fines include careless driving, driving in the passing lane, and failure to signal.

A fiscal impact statement on the bill estimates that fines are

likely to increase in these work zones by more than \$3.3 million annually.

A separate provision of the new law adds road maintenance and construction vehicles to the list of personnel that state law requires all drivers to maintain a safe distance upon approaching. The rule is designed to protect police and other personnel during roadside stops.

Of particular interest to commercial vehicles, the "move over" rule also applies to drivers approaching vehicles pulled over along roadsides to attach tire chains.

## Toll road funding sought in N.C.

RALEIGH, N.C. — A renewed effort in the North Carolina legislature to come up with extra money to help pay for new state toll roads is having success.

The North Carolina House has approved funding for a toll road in western Wake County. It would be the state's first toll route. Wake County is in central North Carolina; Raleigh is the county seat.

A budget provision adopted by the House would give the North Carolina Turnpike Authority \$25

million annually to help pay off the cost of construction for the southern portion of a proposed extension of Interstate 540, known as the Triangle Expressway. The appropriation would continue for 39 years to help build the 18.8-mile stretch of roadway.

Money for the project would come by phasing out the \$172.5 million that annually is rerouted from the state's Highway Trust Fund to the General Fund. It would help make up the difference

between the amount of revenues the state expects to generate from tolls and the total cost — about \$1 billion — to build and maintain the expressway.

The roadway would extend I-540 from Morrisville to Holly Springs. The route is slated to be toll-free north of state Route 55.

Supporters say the toll route is needed to maintain economic growth and reduce traffic congestion. Critics say it's unfair that people using the expressway in western Wake County might have to pay tolls to complete the roadway when the northern half was built with tax dollars.

It now is up to the Senate to approve the expenditure.

## N.J. adds 'driving rights' law

TRENTON, N.J. — A package of new laws in New Jersey that make it easier for drivers with suspended licenses to keep their driving privileges took effect this month. One of the new laws helps drivers of commercial vehicles stay on the road.

The legislation stems from a report issued more than a year ago that said suspending driver licenses often creates unintended consequences, such as job loss and difficulty in finding employment.

"In New Jersey, driving is a necessity, not a luxury. For many... the loss of their driver license can equate with the loss of their job and their ability to support their families," Sen. Shirley Turner, D-Mercer, said in a statement.

As part of the legislation, one bill reduces the severity of license suspensions for certain people. It gives judges or the state Motor Vehicle Commission the option to suspend a vehicle registration rather than the driver's license. The provision allows people with jobs that require a valid driver's license to continue to work but only drive vehicles registered by their employers.

"For those individuals whose livelihood comes from sitting behind the wheel of a company-owned (vehicle), this is a crucial change. It penalizes the driver by taking away personal driving priv-

ileges but still allows them to go about their daily work," Turner said.

## Delays, detours are expected around Mount Vernon Estate

MOUNT VERNON, Va. — A construction project along the George Washington Memorial Parkway and around George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens has begun restricting traffic, creating delays and causing detours.

The National Park Service, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration, is making upgrades to Mount Vernon Circle and to parking lots adjacent to the Mount Vernon estate. (See April 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

The project, expected to be completed this fall, is reconfiguring traffic through Mount Vernon Circle, extending Mount Vernon Trail, resurfacing parking lots, adding 150 parking spaces, and improving visitor access.

Construction includes grading, pavement resurfacing, utility and

drainage improvements, a trail extension and sidewalk additions.

In its latest project update, the Park Service says road construction has begun on the median and the loading and unloading areas at the Mount Vernon Circle. Work on Mount Vernon Circle, which is adjacent to Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens, is expected to continue until mid-August.

One travel lane around Mount Vernon Circle is to remain open at all times. However, coach drivers and other visitors should look for signs announcing lane closures, detours and delays.

Construction updates and suggested alternate routes can be found at <http://www.epl.fhwa.dot.gov/traffic-advisory.aspx>, or by calling (703) 404-6260 or (800) 892-8776 (press option No. 3).

## Seattle to try variable speed limits

SEATTLE — A \$25 million project is underway here that will alter speed limits on Interstate 5 as congestion and other conditions change. The system will help control traffic on a six-mile segment of the roadway.

A key aspect of the system is the installation of overhead electronic speed limit signs on I-5 between Boeing Field and Interstate 90.

Traffic engineers will use the system to prevent congestion while the Alaskan Way Viaduct section of State Route 99 — weakened by age and earthquake damage — is being replaced. SR-99 is a major north-south artery and carries 20-25 percent of downtown Seattle traffic.

It is anticipated that varying the speed limit will reduce the occurrence of rear end collisions on I-5.



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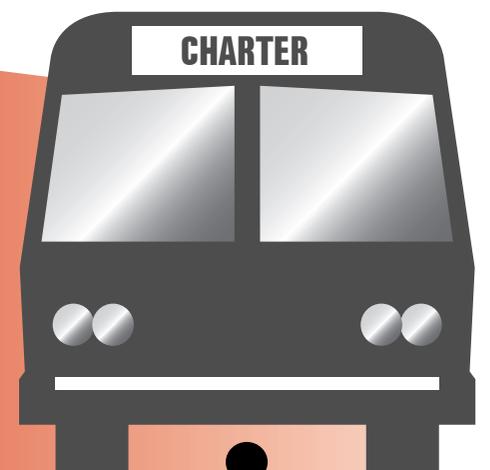
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# MCI develops 'Green Guide' promotion kit for operators

SCHAUMBERG, Ill. — Motor Coach Industries has come up with a solution for operators looking for ways to promote the “green” aspects of coach travel.

The coach builder has created what it calls the “Green Guide” tool kit.

“As air quality, traffic congestion, rising gasoline costs and the hassle of airline travel continue to make news, MCI wants to help operators increase the visibility of motorcoach travel as a convenient,

eco-friendlier way to ride,” says MCI spokeswoman Pat Plodzeen.

The tool kit, available as a DVD to MCI customers with clean-diesel coaches (2007 and newer), includes emissions data, industry facts, promotional items that can be used with operators’ logos, suggested advertising materials, Website content, and guidelines for obtaining press coverage.

MCI introduced the kit to operators participating in its recent “Green marketing” webinar that will be repeated at 2 p.m. (central time) Aug. 20 (see July 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*).

The kit also includes an MCI PRO Support parts flyer on how MCI can help you “green” your existing fleet.

Provided in the kit is a “Power-

ed by clean-air technology” badge to place under the model name on the left side of the door of new coaches.

“MCI is not advocating promoting motorcoach travel on its environmental qualities alone, but also for its other virtues,” said Plodzeen.

“Luxury, riding comfort and reliable service continue to be the

driving force in customer satisfaction. Nevertheless, competition is tougher today, and any additional connection that can meet customer needs, cement the deal and increase business is good for the operator as well as for the industry at large,” Plodzeen noted.

For more information about the tool kit and webinars, e-mail [marketing@mcicoach.com](mailto:marketing@mcicoach.com).

## MCI '09

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

for the J4500 that automatically intervenes in situations where vehicle stability enters a critical area. The system provides the added protection of roll stability control.

“With MCI’s (electronic stability control) system, the driver has a more satisfying sense of control and gains added protection against roll-over, skidding and spinning,” said Ziska.

The reverse sensing system, standard on 2009 MCI J4500 and E4500 models, senses objects at the rear of the coach, alerting the driver to their presence and distance from the bumper.

“Some smaller objects can’t be detected by the system but overall the technology has proven to be a benefit when backing up and maneuvering in tight spaces,” Ziska reported.

All 2009 MCI models will accommodate wireless Internet access. Passengers can send and receive e-mail and use the Internet for free or through a prepay service as designated by the coach operator.

Service door hinges have been upgraded and body panels exposed to salt spray have been treated for corrosion resistance for '09.

The main battery disconnect switch has been modified from a knife-type version to a driver-activated dash switch with an automatic wake-up mode and 30-minute time-out feature.

Fuel tank fittings and relief valves have been updated as well as the rear air suspension which now includes a single check valve to isolate it from front accessories to minimize air leaks.

MCI’s 2009 D4505 will feature a new Braun wheelchair lift, plus other improvements.

MCI says its '09 coaches will be available in mid-August, following the production line’s annual summer vacation, and can be ordered now.

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# Make sure your random drug testing is really random

Turning over a motorcoach carrier's federally required random drug and alcohol testing to a third party doesn't relieve the coach operator of the responsibility of seeing that the program is run properly.

Instead, it should make them even more vigilant.

The rules set by government regulators for testing drivers and other workers assigned to safety-sensitive jobs can be complicated, creating a need for someone in the company to become extremely familiar with them and to carefully monitor the program.

The random testing mandated by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration is aimed at deterring individuals in safety-sensitive positions from using illegal drugs and misusing alcohol. If they don't know when they might be tested, regulators say, then drivers and mechanics will be less likely to use drugs or misuse alcohol.

Under the rules, each person in the random testing pool must have an equal chance of being selected, testing must be spread evenly through out the year and test times should not be predictable.

Here are tips that could help you make sure your program meets federal government requirements:

Do not select the pool a year ahead of time or even on a quarterly basis because people hired after the selection would not be subject to immediate testing.

Place all new employees who required testing in the testing pool immediately after they are hired, and remove those workers who are no longer in safety-sensitive jobs or who have left the company.

If someone is not tested during the selection cycle, they cannot be tested during the next selection period. However, if the person was not tested, then their name must be returned to the pool for the next selection time frame.

An individual can be tested at any time during the selection time frame and it is up to the employer to know the worker's work and vacation schedules and to make sure they are available when called in to be tested. Selecting a substitute who might be more readily available is not permitted.

Employees who are placed on extended sick leave and will be gone for the entire test period can

be removed from the pool and be replaced by an alternate.

An individual cannot be required to report for a test in the middle of vacation time, while sick, or on other types of excused leave. The individual, however, may be called in for work and then be tested.

Operators should keep in mind, too, that the random testing is a "short notice" test and the individual should not be given excessive notification time to be tested.

For example, an employee should not be told at the beginning of his or her work shift that they are to report to a clinic for a drug test at the end of the shift. Such notification would give them time to drink large amounts of water to dilute the specimen, obtain products to adulterate the specimen or obtain substituted urine specimens.

FMCSA directs employers to ensure that once a selected individual is notified, they proceed immediately

to the collection site. If an operator knows that an employee will be unable to leave the work site promptly, they should not be notified until such time as they are able to leave.

Also, the definition of "immediately" should be clearly spelled out in the employer's drug and alcohol testing policy. For example, if the collection site is within five minutes of the work site, the policy should say that when an individual leaves to go to the collection site, they must arrive within 10 or 15 minutes or it will be considered a refusal.

The rules differ a little between drug and alcohol testing.

An employee is subject to random alcohol testing only while performing safety-sensitive functions or just before or just after they perform such functions. Performing a safety-sensitive function includes being immediately available to work in such a posi-

tion. This means that a worker who is doing clerical work, but is available to drive, is subject to random alcohol testing.

Additionally, testing for alcohol should not be confined only to just before an employee begins work. Instead, some tests should be scheduled during the shift or immediately after the shift.

And, finally, individuals covered by FMCSA rules and those who are not cannot be mixed in the same testing pool. You may have one random testing pool for both drugs and alcohol provided you have documentation of how the process works and that the method is scientifically valid and impartial regarding who gets selected. Or, you may have two separate pools, one for drugs and one for alcohol testing.

The bottom line is that operators need to be sure they have documentation for all of their testing procedures and the actual testing.

## Tire failure: What to expect, do

During the past two years, there have been a handful of significant motorcoach crashes that resulted from tire failure.

Here are a half-dozen driver tips that could prove not only helpful but lifesaving. Major signs of tire failure:

**Sound.** The loud "bang" of a blowout is often easily recognized. Because it can take a few seconds for a motorcoach to react, however, the driver might think it was some other vehicle. Best advice: Any time a driver hears a tire blow, it's safest to assume it was on his or her bus.

**Vibration.** If the coach thumps or vibrates heavily, it might be a sign that one of the tires has gone flat. With a rear tire, that might be the only sign.

**Feel.** If the steering feels "heavy," it is probably a sign that one of the front tires has failed. Sometimes the failure of a rear tire will cause the vehicle to "fishtail," that is, to wander back and forth.

What a driver should do:

**Hold the steering wheel firmly.** If a front tire fails, it can literally twist the steering wheel out of your hand. The only way to

prevent this is to keep a firm grip on the steering wheel with both hands at all times.

**Stay off the brake.** It's natural to want to brake in an emergency. However, braking when a tire has failed could cause loss of control.

Unless the coach is about to run into something, stay off the brake until the vehicle has slowed. Then brake very gently, pull off the road and stop.

**Check the tires.** After the coach has come to a complete stop, get out and check all the tires. Do this even if the vehicle seems to be handling OK.

## Safety check

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and other factors in 2005 and 2004, the out-of-service rate for coach drivers was 2.7 percent. In 2003, the driver out-of-service rate was a modest 1.7 percent.

The out-of-service rate for all drivers (most of which are truckers) decreased this year to 5.3 percent, down from 6.2 percent in 2007 and 5.6 percent in 2006.

The out-of-service rate for all

vehicles (mostly trucks) was 20.8 percent, down from 21.5 percent.

Early last month, 9,148 CVSA and FMCSA-certified inspectors at 1,683 locations across North America performed 67,931 truck and bus inspections. More than 52,000 of the total were North American Standard Level I inspections, the most comprehensive roadside inspection.

Both the total number of inspections and Level I inspections were records for the annual Road-check event.

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# Final border crossing rules are seen as worrisome

WASHINGTON — The federal government's "final rule" for all land and sea travel into the United States, which goes into effect next June, has travel industry groups worried it could result in confusion and logjams at America's northern border and possibly hurt inbound U.S. tourism.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Department of State jointly issued the rule as part of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, a core 9/11 Commission border security recommendation.

The rule requires travelers to present a passport or other approved document, denoting citizenship and identity, for all land and sea travel into the U.S., starting June 1, 2009. The requirement covers all travelers who were previously exempt, including citizens of the U.S., Canada and Bermuda.

"We are on course to implement and enforce the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative which is an important step forward in securing the homeland," said Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff. "Limiting and standardiz-

ing the types of documents presented will result in a more secure and efficient border. We will continue to encourage cross-border travel and trade while at the same time decreasing identity theft and fraud."

Meanwhile, the Department of Homeland Security has okayed the Washington State Enhanced Driver's License as a federal government-approved document.

The feds published the final rule well in advance of its implementation to give travelers ample time to obtain the documents they

will need to enter or re-enter the United States starting June 1. Approved documents include a passport, a "trusted traveler card" (NEXUS, SENTRI and FAST), or a Washington State Enhanced Driver's License.

The Department of State also is accepting applications for the new "Passport Cards," a streamlined passport, and additional states and Canadian provinces will be issuing enhanced driver's licenses in the next several months — all designed for land and sea border use.

Beginning next year, the Department of Homeland Security will institute special provisions that allow school or other organized groups of children ages 18 and under who are U.S. or Canadian citizens to enter the U.S. with proof of citizenship alone.

During the next year, the State and Homeland Security departments will be conducting public information campaigns to inform U.S. and Canadian citizens about the new document requirements.

However, the Travel Industry

Association and the Travel Business Roundtable have expressed concern that the feds' plan for building awareness of the new rule is neither ambitious nor expansive enough.

"Despite receiving hundreds of comments about confusion with the new rule changes, the Department of Homeland Security has yet to implement a comprehensive and well-funded communications campaign," said Roger Dow, president and chief executive of TIA.

"The economic stakes are too high for a casual implementation strategy. A 5 percent decline in Canadian visits to the United States could cost the American economy nearly \$700 million," he added.

Dow says the "Travel Promotion Act" (S. 1661 and H.R. 3232), currently pending before Congress, would establish a well-funded public-private campaign to better explain changing U.S. entry policies and welcome more international visitors.

"Border states and the entire American economy need an effective travel promotion and communication program," said Dow.

## Truckers pitch for more road money

WASHINGTON — The trucking industry, as represented by its largest trade association, is calling for dramatic changes in federal ground transportation policy, including more money for highways.

"Currently, our country appears to be facing an economic slowdown, we are in the midst of an energy crisis, and an environmental crisis is looming," says Ray Kuntz, chairman of the American Trucking Associations.

More money to eliminate criti-

cal traffic bottlenecks, more attention to rural highways, limits on tolling and private financing of road projects, more generous weight-and-size restrictions, and dedicated federal congestion-relief funds all have been recommended by Kuntz, who is chairman of a trucking company based in Helena, Mont.

Such changes to federal surface transportation policy would make the highway system much more efficient, Kuntz said in one

session with members of the transportation and infrastructure subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works.

"A long-term plan to rebuild our highway infrastructure and reduce congestion will stimulate our economy, reduce fuel consumption, reduce our carbon footprint and ensure our nation's ability to compete in a global economy," said Kuntz. "The correct path, though not easy, seems clear."

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# UMA election scheduled for fall, directors to be chosen

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The United Motorcoach Association is seeking nominations from its coach operator members to fill a half-dozen, three-year elected seats on its board.

Sept. 1 is the deadline for letters of nomination for the director positions.

Two directors will be elected from each of UMA's three membership regions. Maps showing the regions are printed in the 2007-08 *UMA Membership Directory* and the soon-to-be-released 2008-09 directory.

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

The directors whose seats are expiring are: Region I (the West): Daryl Johnson of J&J Charters in Houston, and Tom Ready of Ready Bus Lines in LaCrescent, Minn.; Region II (the Midwest and South): Robert Hume of Travel Mates of Virginia in Harrisonburg, and

Ralph Young of Young Transportation in Asheville, N.C., and Region III (the Northeast): Joan Libby of Cavalier Coach Trailways in Boston, and Godfrey LeBron of Paradise Trailways in Hicksville, N.Y.

Hume announced at the UMA mid-year board meeting here last month that he and his wife have sold their company, will be retir-

## Canadians may get UMA board seat

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Directors of the United Motorcoach Association have voted to add a coach operator board member from Canada.

The directors took the action at their mid-year meeting here last month.

The association's strategic planning committee had recommended that a fourth UMA membership region be created and the region represent all Canadian coach operator members. Under the recommendation, a single member would be elected by Canadian operators to

ing, and he will not stand for re-election.

Of UMA's 20-member board, 18 are regional directors who must be coach operators and who are elected to three-year staggered terms. In addition, it has one non-coachbuilder associate representative who serves a three-year term, and one coachbuilder associate

sit on the UMA board.

Currently, UMA has three regions with Canadian provinces and territories divvied up among the regions based on their geographic location. Simply put, western Canadian provinces are part of the West region of UMA, eastern provinces are included in the East region, and central provinces are part of the Midwest/South region.

The proposed change would expand the UMA board to 21 members, from 20, and mark the first time Canadian operator members of UMA would have direct and uni-

who also serves a three-year term.

Qualification standards for UMA directors can be found in Article VI of the UMA Bylaws printed in the back of the membership directory.

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

fied representation on the board.

The recommendation was unanimously approved by the board and will be voted on by UMA members in January at the UMA Motorcoach Expo in Orlando.

Also at its June meeting, the UMA board approved Long Beach, Calif., as the site of the 2012 UMA Motorcoach Expo. The board picked Long Beach over Phoenix for a variety of reasons, including more reasonable room rates, a wider variety of hotels close to downtown and exclusive use of the city convention center.

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 UMA meetings.

Written letters of nomination must state the candidate's name, company affiliation, home-base location, and be postmarked no later than Sept. 1. 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*.

UMA members 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.



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## megabus

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

operates 17 of the Van Hool T925 double-deck coaches on Midwestern routes, and is ramping up to run 18 in the Eastern U.S. The luxury double-deckers are equipped with WiFi, DVD players, individual headsets and seat belts.

Moser pointed out that double-deckers offer the passengers a unique experience, while megabus (and the environment) benefit from their efficiency.

Until recently, line-haul passenger counts had been declining in the U.S., but that trend has reversed during the past two years (See January issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*).

According to Souter the obvious explanation, increasing fuel prices, is only a minor reason for the upswing. megabus.com and some of its competitors have been experiencing rapid growth, with only a few routes that didn't carry their weight.

Souter attributes the growth to several factors. Like others, megabus avoids the pitfall of scheduling a complex web of routes, specializing instead in providing direct service between logical city pairs. It then works with the cities to select curbside locations that are convenient for customers.

What evolves is a hub-and-spoke system that fits the megabus.com schedule to the needs of the customer, rather than scheduling for the convenience of the system.

He also thinks the use of Internet-based ticketing and avoiding traditional bus stations changes the demographics. Fair, or not, bus stations are not generally perceived as safe, comfortable or clean places.



Stagecoach Group Chief Executive Brian Souter, left, and Coach USA President Dale Moser, right, are joined by N.Y. Giants' football great Michael Strahan for the kickoff of megabus double-deck service.

In many locales, strategically located curbside pickups, near restaurants and public transportation, may actually feel more comfortable and safer to potential passengers.

In analyzing their market research, one surprise has been the number of young women who ride megabus regularly. Souter felt this was a result of company efforts to create both the perception and the reality of a safe environment.

Asked about differences between UK and U.S. bus passengers, Souter indicated their expectations were about the same. U.S. riders were willing to go a bit far-

ther on a bus than their British counterparts, perhaps as a result of the UK's extensive rail network.

In addition to marketing campaigns targeting students and the Internet savvy, part of megabus' strategy is to ride a wave of "word of mouth" advertising.

"Googling megabus seems to indicate it's working, and Coach USA sources say revenue continues to grow.

While waiting for the coach, one passenger told a reporter for the *New York Daily News*: "I want a bus with dignity."

Maybe an idea whose time has come.

fire testing," noted NHTSA spokesman Eric L. Bolton.

Among the preliminaries are:

- An inspection of buses that have been involved in fires
- A literature search on material flammability
- An evaluation of laboratory test results
- An examination of existing requirements for materials used inside coaches

The results of the completed crash tests and the study methodology developed for the upcoming sled and fire tests can be viewed online at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov). Under the heading More Search Options on the right side of the screen, click on Advanced Docket Searches. Put National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in the Agency box and NHTSA-2007-28793 in the Docket ID box

and then click on Submit. When the next page appears, click on the highlighted docket number.

## D.C. tickets

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

of the district.

The D.C. Motor Carrier Division of the Department of Motor Vehicles confirms that the permit requirement is being enforced throughout the district — including along I-295 — and not just where there is a lot of tour and charter bus travel.

"If you enter the district anywhere without a permit or an apportionment tag that does not include the district, then you will be subject to a ticket and a fine," stresses a spokeswoman for the agency.

She did not know how many

## Coach USA/Coach Canada show profit, revenues gains in FY '08

PERTH, Scotland — Revenue and operating profit at Coach USA and Coach Canada posted solid increases during fiscal 2008, but the gains trailed those of other units of their parent company, Stagecoach Group.

For the 12 months ended April 30, Coach USA and Coach Canada had combined revenue of \$474.3 million, up 5 percent from fiscal 2007 revenue of \$451.4 million. The revenue growth between fiscal '07 and '08 was less than between '06 and '07, when revenue rose by more than 8 percent.

The revenue figures do not include sales by megabus.com, the intercity curbside service that was launched by Coach USA in spring 2006. megabus posted revenue of \$11.3 million in fiscal '08, up from \$4.7 million in fiscal '07.

Operating profit for Coach USA and Coach Canada, excluding megabus.com, during fiscal 2008 was \$48 million, a sharp increase from the \$36.6 million earned a year ago.

The operating profit margin for Coach USA-Coach Canada in fiscal '08 was 10.1 percent, up from 8 percent in fiscal '07.

megabus.com continued to lose money in fiscal '08 as the start-up and expansion of the service continued. megabus lost \$5.8 million in FY '08, versus a \$2 million loss in fiscal '07.

Stagecoach Group said it was pleased with the Coach USA-Coach Canada results in view of the "challenging economic environment."

"We have achieved further like-for-like revenue growth in our operations in the United States and Canada and met our objective of a 10 percent operating margin a year

ahead of plan," the company said.

Stagecoach said Coach USA and Coach Canada continue to focus on providing high quality and safe service, effective marketing of core scheduled and leisure services, operational efficiencies, and winning and retaining contract business.

Coach USA-Coach Canada increased capital spending in fiscal 2008 to \$56 million, up from roughly \$44 million the year before.

Meanwhile, Stagecoach said companywide profits climbed 7 percent in fiscal 2008, to 174 million pounds, or roughly \$347 million (U.S.). Revenue from continuing businesses was up 17.2 percent, to 1.76 billion pounds, or \$3.5 billion (U.S.).

Stagecoach, which operates buses and owns several rail franchises in the United Kingdom, said global factors were making public transport more popular with British travelers.

Chief executive Brian Souter said the change in attitudes was being driven by "increasing road congestion, rising fuel costs and concern about climate change. We are leading the sector in offering customers greener, smarter travel to reduce their carbon footprint," said Souter.

"In the UK, our bus division has achieved six successive years of organic passenger volume growth and we have expanded our regional bus operations through targeted bolt-on acquisitions.

"We have strengthened our position as a leading UK rail operator, generating strong revenue growth, winning new contracts and offering consistently high quality of service to our customers," Souter added.

## Crash test

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

fire-resistant exterior components, and assessing the tenability of the passenger compartment during a wheel-well fire.

The NHTSA said the tests will focus only on fires that start in the areas near the rear wheel wells and fuel lines because the Swedish National Testing and Research Institute is planning full-scale fire testing of motorcoaches and there is no need to repeat the same tests. Instead, it said results of the wheel-well study will complement the Swedish testing.

The testing process is not scheduled to start until early next year and will take about two years to complete. "There is a fair amount of research and development necessary in preparation for the actual

tickets have been issued, either on I-295 or totally.

Under the D.C. law, operators can avoid the need for a trip permit if their coaches are fully registered in the district or if they purchase apportioned plates in their home state and pay the district a fee based on the number of times each coach travels through the district each year.

The districtwide ticketing policy adds to the controversy the trip-permit requirement has generated since it was put into effect about a year ago.

A coalition of industry trade groups has charged that the permit requirement is simply a money grab by the district to bolster rev-

enues and have attempted to get the district to drop it. D.C. trip permits cost \$50 for each coach and are good for just six days.

The coalition sued the district last year, claiming the requirement violated federal interstate commerce laws and vehicle registration rules. However, to the surprise of virtually no one, the permits were upheld by a D.C. Superior Court judge in June, allowing police to continue enforcement efforts. An appeal is being considered.

For more information about the permits, or to apply for one, call (202)729-7083, or visit [www.dmv.dc.gov](http://www.dmv.dc.gov) and click on Trip Permit. The permits can be obtained by telephone, fax or online.

# The adventures of an old guy riding curbside buses

By Dave Millhouser

I love flying. I HATE airports and airlines. So, when I had to make a trip from Boston to New York, it seemed wise to try the new curbside bus lines. (In addition, if you hadn't figured it out, I'm cheap).

Even better, I conned the senior editor of this newspaper into letting me write an article about the experience, and he'd pay for the trip. I'd travel incognito (Latin for "I don't know who I am").

The only hard part was figuring out how to buy tickets. Many of the curbside carriers have gone to Internet-based ticketing. In addition to saving money, it tends to eliminate some of the riff-raff. If that's their strategy, they'll have to do better because even an aging riff-raff (like me) can figure out the web pages.

Cleverly disguised as a chubby old guy, I waddled to the gate at Boston's South Station, clutching the printout of my \$8.50 ticket and began the adventure. Tickets in the Northeast vary in price from \$1 to \$18 depending on when you book.

A couple of things became

apparent immediately. There are LOTS of folks riding the curbsides. On this Monday morning, four different carriers left from the same spot and each was at least 75 percent full.

It seemed just like an airport gate until a young woman turned up with some sort of ticket problem. A dispatcher jokingly told her he'd have to slap her hand, then sorted out her ticket, and made sure she was on the right bus. You had the feeling that, in an airport, the slap might have been harder, and on the face.

Curbside, there were a few differences between companies, minor in nature. One carrier provided a dispatcher, while the others seemed to depend on passengers informing each other, with a little help from drivers.

There was a bit of confusion

but we all worked things out as a team, and had a good time doing it. Here we were, strangers on a Manhattan street corner actually talking to each other.

The buses were new, and clean. The seat spacing was far better than an airplane, and the computer WiFi worked perfectly. You're allowed to use your cell phone, and the few conversations that I noticed were quiet and civilized.

Once the coach reached the interstate, you forgot you were on a bus. On two different carriers, riding three routes, the experience was virtually the same — smooth drivers, reasonable speed.

In a later conversation, the executive of one curbside operator said his company had been pleasantly surprised by the number of young women traveling on their coaches. He believes that carefully

chosen curbside locations and targeted marketing have created a "safe" atmosphere that women appreciate.

If he was pleasantly surprised, imagine how the young men on the buses feel. Since a substantial portion of the curbside's marketing is word-of-mouth...this ratio may change.

The demographics were interesting. Many of the passengers were college-aged kids, with a substantial number of older folks. That makes sense, in that these groups have less money, and more time, than business people.

Ironically, once you sort out ground transportation, waiting time in the airport, and security delays, it's not certain that air travel would have been faster on any of the three legs.

There was a liberal sprinkling

of all sorts of folks. You could make the case that our multicultural gang looked like the cast of a disaster film...but we had no disaster.

On each of the three legs I rode there was at least one elderly couple, formally dressed, looking like they were riding a 1940's passenger train. Nice.

Forty-year-old Derek Hackett told the *New York Daily News* that he liked the curbside buses because "They don't stink."

If my experience is representative, they're doing a whole lot better than that. For trips of 400 miles or less, it's a civilized way to go.

And, in case you were wondering, no one saw through my crafty disguise, everyone on all three buses thought I was a chubby old man.

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



Dave Millhouser

## Toronto-New York curbside service begins

NEW YORK — Greyhound Canada and Adirondack Trailways have created a new curbside service that operates between New York City and Toronto.

The service competes with the

recently launched megabus.com runs between the two cities.

The Greyhound-Adirondack service is called Neon and it offers twice daily departures from both cities, with fares starting at \$1 one

way. Typical fares are \$25 to \$75. Walk-up tickets cost \$85 one way.

The Neon coaches have video screens, Wi-Fi service and power outlets. Tickets are being sold online at [www.greyhound.com](http://www.greyhound.com).

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## Getting involved

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

involvement. And Eyre Bus has reaped rewards as well.

Industry proponents of community involvement have some practical advice to operators for getting out into the community.

The senior Eyre has found advantages in being involved with civic groups, such as the Rotary Club. "The business that I got from that was unbelievable," he says. "The business return, the name recognition — the face was there in the community."

LeBron also believes firmly in the power of networking. His local chamber of commerce, for example, has helped him financially through networking functions. "I would recommend to take advantage of networking."

But, choose your charities carefully, advises LeBron. "Today, in this world of being politically correct, you have to choose things that aren't going to offend people. People don't usually have a problem with babies," so he has been active with the March of Dimes.

One technique LeBron uses is involving his business in the community. For example, he sometimes donates a bus to excursions for Alzheimer patients involved in a YMCA adult-care program.

Steve Klika, president of International Motor Coach Group Inc., also suggests operators encourage their staff to get involved, whether it's with a church or parent-teacher organizations.

LeBron agrees. "It gives the company a strong sense of moral strength. ... Not everyone can write a \$1,000 check, but you might have an employee who can give \$10."

Brian Scott, president of Escort Bus Lines in Largo, Fla., is in the infancy stages of his community involvement, but he has hopes for big things. He has been involved in the industry for the past decade, but now he's ready to expand his local community activities.

"I want to be a positive influence," Scott says. He attends transit board meetings regularly, and he is working to get involved in the prestigious Leadership Pinellas, which is a member of The Community Leadership Association, a

nationwide effort to identify future community leaders.

"I hope to get some business, but I want my company to be a go-to for solutions in the community," says Scott.

Leadership programs are the easiest and best way to get started in the community, says Klika. "It teaches you social responsibility. You will be expected to get involved in boards, community service."

Klika himself has long been involved in his communities. Today, in Kansas, he serves as a school board member for Blue Valley School District, and has leadership roles with the Overland Park Convention & Visitors Bureau, Johnson County Transit and SAFEHOME, a domestic violence program.

Eyre notes that community involvement can also bring press coverage. Eyre's connections in the community brought him, for example, a feature on the cover of *The Baltimore Sun's* business section.

In another case, Eyre and his wife, Joanne, won a dancing contest to benefit Howard County Tourism — a not-for-profit that promotes tourism — and their

## Tourism Cares events scheduled

CANTON, Mass. — The 2008 Tourism Cares Summit will be Aug. 3-6 in Las Vegas, with a focus on "green travel."

The annual summit brings travel sellers together with buyers. Forums at this year's event will consider the "responsible and sustainable tourism" movement.

On Sept. 16, Tourism Cares will host the 2008 Tourism Hall of Fame Gala dinner. J.W. 'Bill' Marriott Jr., chairman of CEO of Marriott International, will be hon-

ored and inducted into the hall of fame.

For information about the two events, go to [www.tourismcares.org](http://www.tourismcares.org).

Last month, Tourism Cares relocated its office in Canton to 275 Turnpike St. The phone, fax and Zip Code remain unchanged.

Tourism Cares for America is a nonprofit organization that strives to bring individuals employed in tourism together to work, network and give back, while demonstrating the industry's importance.

antics ended up on the front page of the community paper. "People sent e-mails, made copies. We got a huge reaction from that, even nine months later."

Operators also point out the intangibles of giving back — it feels good.

"I have always felt the need to give back to the community that you serve, which for us is the entire Baltimore-Washington, D.C., market," says Eyre.

Where does LeBron's dedica-

tion to service come from?

"It all pretty much comes from my mom. She always stressed that in me when I was a young boy. Your good deeds will help you with your life. The more you give, the more you will receive.

"One of the highest forms of donating is employing people. We're always maligned. The only time we get press is when there is an accident. (But) we are the fiber of the community because travel is central to life."

## Driver training

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

train potential bus drivers. It is the only one of the nine known to be doing so.

Chuck Blagg, a former motorcoach driver and director of the college's program, is hoping to obtain, as donations, two school buses to use for behind-the-wheel training.

The need for bus drivers is critical, in part, because there's considerable turnover, said Blagg. "Most school bus drivers are part-timers,"

he said. "It's not an eight-hour-a-day job. And with fuel prices where they are, everybody is looking for a part-time job."

Blagg has no idea how many students will apply, and the number he will be able to accept depends on whether he receives one bus or two. A lot also depends on whether school districts will turn over their driver programs to him.

"I can do it cheaper," he asserts.

The course, which Blagg hopes to have up and running by September, will consist of 80 hours

of instruction and will focus on school buses and motorcoaches. It will include information on the need to pass U.S. Department of

Transportation drug screening; a written exam that covers the state motor vehicle division skills program; vehicle inspections, and a behind-the-wheel driving test.

"We'll test them at the end and send them to MVD," Blagg said.

The course also will provide instruction on handling and dealing with passengers.

"It will cover first aid for

school bus drivers, how to control bullying on a school bus, danger zone awareness and night driving," he said.

Asked whether he will market the program to bus companies, Blagg replied: "We've got things in the works but nothing solid yet."

Blagg and a staff member both have passenger endorsement CDLs from Arizona. Together they have more than 30 years of experience behind the wheel of motorcoaches, he said.

Here is a rundown on the eight

other grant recipients:

- Cuyahoga Community College, Cleveland, Ohio. Awarded \$83,300. An official of the college's Regional Transportation Institute said the intention is to launch a bus driver training program, but he couldn't provide details.

- Arkansas State University, Newport, Ark. Awarded \$87,500. Bentley Wallace, director of the commercial drivers training program, said the school does not train bus drivers. "We always look at opportunities to expand the curriculum, but the guidelines of our grant would not allow that. Our grant is specifically for enhanced safety training for over-the-road drivers." Wallace added that most bus companies train their own drivers.

- West Hills Community College, Coalinga, Calif. Awarded \$80,640. The school focuses on training heavy equipment drivers.

- Ozarks Technical Community College, Springfield, Mo. Awarded \$198,087. Cindy Stephens said the CDL program is exclusively for over-the-road truck drivers. "Our current focus is not on the bus and motorcoach industry," she said.

- Waubensee Community College, Sugar Grove, Ill., awarded \$49,855; National Tractor Trailer School, Liverpool, N.Y., awarded \$120,000; Lehigh Carbon Community College, Schnecksville, Pa., awarded \$127,955, and Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College, Orangeburg, S.C., awarded \$200,000, did not return phone calls or could not be reached for comment.

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## Calendar

### JULY 2008

**16 MCI Webinar on Regeneration.** 2 p.m. Central Time. Info: E-mail: [marketing@mcicoach.com](mailto:marketing@mcicoach.com). RSVP by July 14.

**17-20 National Motorcoach Network Invitational 100,** MainStay Suites Hotel, Pigeon Forge, Tenn. Info: Go to [www.motorcoach.com](http://www.motorcoach.com), or call (888) 733-5287.

**19-22 Georgia Motorcoach Operators Association Annual Meeting & Marketplace,** Hilton Atlanta North East, Atlanta. Info: [www.gamotorcoachoperators.org](http://www.gamotorcoachoperators.org).

**23 MCI Webinar on Updating Your Website.** 2 p.m. Central Time. Info: E-mail: [marketing@mcicoach.com](mailto:marketing@mcicoach.com). RSVP by July 21.

### AUGUST 2008

**3-7 Alabama Motorcoach Association Annual Meeting & Marketplace,** MainStay Suites Hotel, Pigeon Forge, Tenn. Info: [www.alabamamotorcoach.org](http://www.alabamamotorcoach.org).

**6-8 International Motor Coach Group Strategic Alliance Meeting,** Chantilly, Va. Info: Go to [www.imgcoach.com](http://www.imgcoach.com).

## People

Mark L. Szyperki has been named director of business development of **Anchor Trailways** in Nashville, Tenn. The job is a new position for Anchor Trailways, although the company had contracted with Szyperki as a consultant in the past.

Szyperki has more than 30 years of experience in the motorcoach industry, having held positions of operations supervisor through general manager at motorcoach companies. Most recently, Szyperki has been working with the **Trailways Transportation System** as a consultant doing sales and training. In his position at Anchor Trailways, Szyperki will be responsible for a number of operational, marketing and human resource activities.

"Mark Szyperki has years of experience in our industry that we are able to use as we work toward continuous improvement in our company," said Jared Stancil, vice president. "His knowledge and contacts will help us in taking the company to the next level," Stancil added.

Anchor Trailways has been in business for 19 years and has operations in Alabama, and Kentucky. It has a fleet of 43 motorcoaches, 2 executive coaches and 2 midsize buses.

## NAMO conference is next month in Houston

HOUSTON — The National Association of Motorcoach Operators 2008 Semi-Annual Conference will be Aug. 14-17 at the Doubletree Hotel Houston Intercontinental.

The conference will feature seminars and presenters discussing key industry issues.

Topics include: Surviving a catastrophic accident; Purchasing: New vs. Pre-owned Coaches; Investigating and Entering New Markets; Go Green Initiatives for Your Company; Legislative Issues Affecting the Transportation Industry, and Obtaining Affordable Financing.

Guest speakers will represent National Interstate Insurance, Lancer Insurance, the Federal Transit Administration, the United Motorcoach Association and the American Bus Association.

A new coach display will feature buses from from BCI, MCI, Prevost, Setra, Stallion Bus, Tri-

dent and Van Hool.

Representatives from other industry suppliers and vendors also will be on hand.

For more information about the conference, including registration information, go to [www.namocoaches.org](http://www.namocoaches.org), or e-mail [jjcharters@aol.com](mailto:jjcharters@aol.com).

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