

## Proposed rules will mean better hiring info

### Fuller disclosure of driver history is the goal

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has proposed sweeping new rules designed to significantly improve the ability of motorcoach and other commercial vehicle operators to make smarter and better informed hiring decisions.

Among other things, the pro-

posed rules will require employers to divulge a former employee's complete driving history, along with any problems the individual had with drugs and alcohol.

Importantly, the rules also will provide liability protection to employers for providing such

information about former employees by making it a federal regulatory requirement to do so.

Additionally, the rules will oblige employers to respond to requests for information about a former employee faster and to hold on to employee-related

records three-times longer.

At the same time, the supplemental notice of proposed rule-making contains elements intended to ensure commercial motor vehicle driver privacy.

"These drivers are responsible for the safe, secure and reliable

operation of commercial motor vehicles on our nation's roads and highways," said Acting FMCSA Administrator Annette M. Sandberg. "Providing employers access to more information about driver safety performance history will ultimately save lives."

Such rules have been a top pri-

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### 'HANG IN THERE!'

## Texas operator stays positive despite hurdles

By Karen Crabtree

CROSBY, Texas — After 12 years of watching bus companies come and go in Houston, Daryl Johnson has grown weary of quality operators having to close their doors.

Johnson's father founded the family coach company, J&J Charters, in Crosby a dozen years ago to compete in the Houston market. The company still has its first bus, a 1979 MC-9.

Now the second-largest charter and tour operator in the market, with 17 coaches, J&J Charters is struggling like much of the rest of the coach industry.

"Sometimes I come to work and I think, 'have I lost my mind?'" Johnson said in a recent interview. Like other operators, Johnson faces a litany of challenges: High fuel costs, staggering insurance premiums, low-balling competitors, weak demand, skittish customers, and too many buses sitting idle in the yard each day.

Yet, Johnson remains optimistic.

He's convinced the industry is starting to make a slow turn toward brighter days. Meanwhile, he's willing to share what he's doing

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Daryl Johnson



## Investors to buy chunk of Coach USA

PERTH, Scotland — Stagecoach Group PLC plans to sell the Southeast region of Coach USA, including the Florida operation, to a group of private investors that includes two New York-based investment organizations.

The sale price is \$48 million.

The Southeast region of Coach USA is comprised of eight companies in Maryland, Georgia, North Carolina, as well as Florida. The units in those states operate more than 500 vehicles and employ 620 people. The deal also includes the purchase of an additional 58 vehicles, representing \$5 million of the purchase price.

Completion of the transaction is subject to normal regulatory approvals, final confirmation of financing and routine closing conditions. The buyers are paying \$40 million in cash, with the balance financed with an \$8 million note.

Coach USA's Southeast region has been one of its better performing units despite the lousy economy and the travel slump in Florida. The region had sales of \$49.8 million in the 12 months ended April 30, with an operating profit — before goodwill amortization — of \$5.8 million, or a margin of more than 11 percent.

Among the companies included in

the sale are such well-known operators as America Charters of Charlotte, N.C.; Southern Coach Co. of Durham, N.C.; American Coach Lines in Norcross, Ga.; Grayline of Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; American Bus Lines in Miami; Tippet Travel in Florida, and Dillion's Bus Service in Millersville, Md.

At one time, these Coach USA companies were owned by such industry stalwarts as Louis Wade Jr., Billy Ray Rhyme, Calvin Cooper, Michael Gaddis, Marie and Charles Tippet, Louis Cicerone and the Dillons — Keith, Brian and Ron.

Brian Souter, chief executive of

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### THE DOCKET

#### Safety Concern

A fatal fire on a paratransit bus has industry safety experts once again pondering how to best to evacuate disabled passengers. **Page 4**

#### One More Time

For the third time in four years, the NTSB has taken aim at 15-passenger vans. **Page 4**

#### More bad news

In October, motorcoach licensing fees tripled in California. Now, state legislators want to

boost registration fees by 42 percent. **Page 5**

#### Support sought

Members of the U.S. Senate have been asked to support coach industry initiatives that will help them compete more effectively. **Page 6**

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# James River Bus maps new course, buys Carey unit

RICHMOND, Va. — James River Bus Lines, one of the mid-Atlantic states' oldest coach operators, has charted a new strategic direction during its 75th year in business.

James River executives spent nearly six months developing a strategic plan that will guide the company for the next three or four years. The purchase a few weeks ago of Carey VIP Chauffeured Services, which offers limousine, sedan, van and minicoach service from three locations in Virginia, is a key component of the plan.

"This acquisition is part of an ongoing effort to provide the highest quality service for our clients," says company President Stephen W. Story. "Even in difficult economic times, it's essential to maintain the level of service that our clients have come to expect."

Acquiring Carey added a new dimension to James River's corporate makeup, product mix and operational capability. Integrated into the strategic plan, Carey allows James River to set a course that includes:

- Offering a broader range of services;
- Targeting new niches, non-traditional business and less price-sensitive markets;
- Diversifying its products;
- Spreading its support-service



costs over more people and vehicles.

"Now, no matter who we go to,

than 50 coaches, serving primarily the central East Coast.

When Story and his team

ness in greater Richmond, its primary territory. Another 25 percent of the market is what Story calls

opportunities, and expand business with existing clients.

For example, Richmond has a growing base of corporations, many of which are James River customers. These existing clients, as well as corporations not being served by James River, have become a primary target market. "We can increase this market because we had our foot in the door," says Story.

To capture additional corporate business, the company began calling on potential corporate customers. At one company, they were told "we would use you if you

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**'We're adding on piece by piece. None of these are a home run, but a bunch of base hits.'**

we can offer them something," says Story. "Charter, tour services, meeting and event planning, transportation management services, contract services, chauffeured services, you name it."

Since 1928, James River has been a family owned motorcoach company. Today, it operates a diversified fleet, containing more

began the planning process they started with a realistic assessment of their market, the potential of various market segments and their own capabilities. The market assessment concluded, among other things, that James River had about maximized its penetration.

The company figures it has more than 50 percent of the busi-

"hard to get business," meaning the competition has it largely locked up. The remaining 20-25 percent is composed primarily of price-sensitive clients.

To foster growth, the James River team decided on a three-part approach: Target potential customers and markets that are "not so price sensitive," create new

## Diesel prices roll up

For the first time since the first week in March, diesel fuel prices have posted an increase in every region of the United States.

The average price across the country was \$1.44 a gallon at the end of July, which is 2 cents a gallon higher than the low for the year, \$1.42 a gallon, posted during the last week in June.

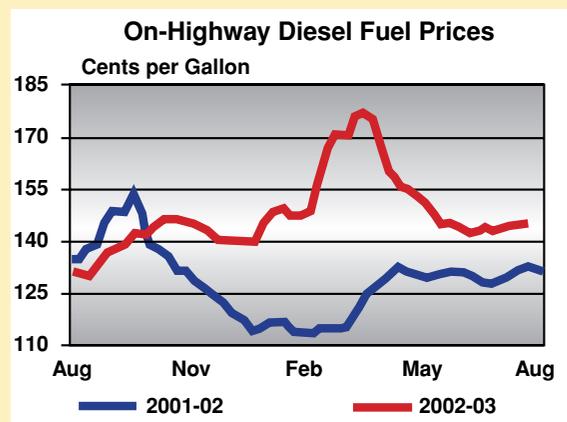
The \$1.44 price puts the U.S. average nearly 13 cents per gallon higher than a year ago.

Average U.S. diesel prices have been \$1.42-\$1.44 a gallon since the middle of May, reflecting an economy that hasn't been strong enough to put much upward pressure on prices.

Diesel is likely to remain steady for another two or three weeks before the onset of the annual fall-winter price climb that typically takes diesel prices to their yearly high during the depths of winter when demand for home heating oil peaks.

California recorded the biggest upward price bump, with diesel averaging \$1.61 per gallon, or 4 cents higher than a month ago. The price in California also is more than 21 cents a gallon higher than it was a year ago. Refinery problems continue to restrict supplies in the Golden State.

The region with the lowest prices — by a noticeable margin — remains the Gulf Coast, followed by the Lower Atlantic.



## Diesel Fuel Prices

Cents per Gallon	Price	Change from	
		Week Ago	Year Ago
U.S.	143.9	▲ 0.4	▲ 12.8
East Coast	144.7	▲ 0.2	▲ 13.3
New England	156.5	▲ 0.7	▲ 16.7
Central Atlantic	154.5	▲ 0.1	▲ 15.4
Lower Atlantic	139.4	▲ 0.1	▲ 12.1
Midwest	141.0	▲ 0.2	▲ 10.8
Gulf Coast	138.7	▲ 0.5	▲ 11.0
Rocky Mountain	146.8	▲ 0.1	▲ 13.4
West Coast	159.0	▲ 1.8	▲ 20.8
California	164.0	▲ 2.8	▲ 21.3

## National Motorcoach Network marks 20th year with meeting

FAIRFAX STATION, Va. — National Motorcoach Network Inc., founded in the wake of deregulation of the over-the-road bus industry in the early 1980s, is marking its 20th year with an anniversary meeting later this month.

The motorcoach marketing organization also has issued its annual National Motorcoach Directory, a guide to its 41 motorcoach operator members, plus tour operators, travel resources and vendors.

"We continue to service the many tour operators, travel agents, businesses, schools, colleges, athletic teams and others who have come to rely on the *National Motorcoach Directory* over the past two decades," says Stephen Kirchner, president of the network.

Kirchner announced formation of the network in April 1983, at the National Press Club

in Washington, D.C., shortly after the federal government deregulated the industry.

"The National Motorcoach Network provided an umbrella where many family-owned motorcoach companies could develop their marketing talents to compete in a very different, challenging and competitive environment," says Kirchner. "A number of those companies have prospered through the years and are considered to be leaders in the industry today."

Now, Kirchner observes, operators are being severely challenged again, this time by the lingering impact of 9/11, the sour economy, the war in Iraq and higher insurance premiums. The weakened economy has forced companies out of business and produced attrition among members of the network.

Says Kirchner: "This year is

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# THE DOCKET

## Fatal bus fire worries safety community

### *One rider could not be evacuated*

ALLENTOWN, Pa. — A horrific fire in a midsize paratransit bus that killed a disabled man has the nation's bus safety community again worrying about the issue of how to deal with such incidents.

"This is a great example of the problem (and lack of a solution) with emergency evacuation of disabled passengers," said one safety consultant.

The tragedy that has the industry buzzing occurred in late June in east Allentown when an engine-compartment fire in a Goshen cutaway bus operated by a paratransit service quickly spread to the passenger cabin.

Several passers-by helped pull two elderly women out of the burning bus, but were unable to save a man in a wheelchair who died in the inferno.

The bus was owned by LANTA, the public transit system serving Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton, Pa. The service was operated by the Valley Association for Specialized Transportation (VAST) and Easton Coach of Easton, Pa., which also provided the drivers

and handled the daily and routine maintenance on the vehicles.

Steven Hummel, executive director of VAST, said the agency's buses have preventive maintenance inspections every 5,000 miles or two months. He said VAST drivers undergo safe-

**'In a matter of minutes the entire bus was in flames.'**

ty training because they deal mainly with disabled and elderly riders. VAST makes 1,200 pickups per day in Lehigh and Northampton counties.

The driver of the bus that burned has been with the service for a year and a half and he reportedly did all he could to save the victim.

A police official said the driver pulled over after noticing smoke coming from the air conditioning vents. When he opened the hood, he discovered the engine compartment in flames. The fire quickly spread to

the rest of the vehicle.

Said one witness: "It looked like the engine caught fire. In a matter of minutes, the entire bus was in flames." The cutaway was built on a Ford E450 chassis and had a diesel engine.

One of the problems in dealing with the incident apparently was the failure of the wheelchair lift to function after the fire started. Two bystanders were able to lift one of the women passengers off the extended wheelchair lift ramp while she was still in her chair.

The man who was killed died while sitting in his wheelchair on the extended ramp that could not be lowered.

Heat detectors and fire suppression systems have long been considered — and sometimes employed — to deal with such incidents. However, one state transit official said the effectiveness of fire suppression systems depends on where the sensors are relative to the fire and what temperature thresholds are used.

A long-time coach industry source said it may once again be time to reconsider suppression and detector technology, and whether it should be mandatory on all ADA accessible vehicles.

## NTSB once again makes strong recommendations concerning 15-pax vans

WASHINGTON — For the third time in four years, the National Transportation Safety Board has targeted the safety of 15-passenger vans, issuing new recommendations designed to reduce the number and severity of crashes involving large vans.

The latest recommendations were issued last month following a NTSB investigation of two rollover accidents involving 15-passenger vans two years ago. In both crashes, a single van was involved and no other vehicle.

The first crash occurred near Henrietta, Texas, in May 2001, and the other near Randleman, N.C., in July 2001. In the Texas crash, the left rear tire blew, sending a 1993 Dodge van off the road, causing it to roll. Four people died, including the driver, and eight others were seriously hurt.

The North Carolina crash involved a 1989 Dodge van that also suffered a blowout of its left rear tire. The driver couldn't control the van and it rolled, ejecting passengers. One person died, three others had serious injuries, and nine passengers and the driver were less seriously injured.

In both crashes, the NTSB decided the probable cause was tire failure, plus the drivers' inability to maintain control.

Contributing to the severity of the accidents, according to the NTSB, was the lack of appropriate Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards applicable to 15-passenger vans in the area of restraints and occupant protection. In the Texas accident, two persons were wearing lap/shoulder belts. Seven passengers were ejected.

In the Randleman, N.C., accident, the driver was wearing a lap/shoulder belt and the front-seat passenger was wearing the lap portion of a lap/shoulder belt. Four passengers were ejected.

A number of studies and investigations by the NTSB and others have shown that 15-passenger vans have a high propensity to roll over when there is an incident, such as a blowout, or when a front

wheel on the van drops off the edge of the pavement. The likelihood of a rollover increases even more when the van is loaded with passengers. That's because the center of gravity is raised.

The Safety Board concluded following its latest investigation that the safe operation of 15-passenger vans requires a knowledge and skill level different and above that for automobiles, particularly when the big vans are fully loaded or drivers experience an emergency situation.

"The NTSB's recommendations are based on fact, science and data. And our analysis in these accidents demonstrate that we must do more to protect children and adults who travel in 15-passenger vans," said Ellen G. Engleman, NTSB chairman.

The Safety Board's No. 1 recommendation was that all states and the District of Columbia establish a driver license endorsement for 15-passenger vans requiring drivers to complete a training program on the operation of the vans and pass a written and skills test.

Simulations by the Safety Board of the Texas accident show that passengers would not have been ejected, nor would they have received such serious injuries, if they had been wearing lap/shoulder belts. Therefore, the board recommended that adjustable lap/shoulder belts be installed in all seating positions in 15-passenger vans.

The board also recommended that manufacturers develop stronger roof structures to provide better protection when vans roll. The NTSB wants the improved protection for 2006 models.

The NTSB asked the National Highway Safety Administration, in cooperation with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, to revise its definitions of buses and commercial motor vehicles to apply consistently to 12- and 15-passenger vans, taking into account the unique operating characteristics and multiple functions of these vans.

## Tour directors' status is focus of fight

WASHINGTON — The National Tour Association and the U.S. Tour Operators Association have petitioned the Labor Department to clarify the employment status of tour directors.

The associations have hired a Washington-area think tank specializing in tax and labor issues, the Argus Group, to help with their lobbying regarding regulations governing exempt and non-exempt tour director employees.

The issue of whether tour directors are exempt or non-exempt employees has plagued tour operators since the early 1990s. Because tour directors are most often seasonal employees, working non-traditional hours, the associations believe there is an open question whether tour directors' status should be regarded as exempt or non-exempt.

The associations hope "to bring

much-needed clarity to this long-standing and challenging issue," said NTA President Hank Phillips.

NTA and USTOA are asking the Department of Labor to develop specific regulations regarding tour directors, clearly defining their status.

The associations submitted a 20-page letter to the administrator of the Wage and Hour Division of the DOL Employment Standards Administration setting out their position. The letter was in response to a Labor Department proposal that would make it easier for tour directors to be classified as non-exempt.

"I feel very strongly about the exempt/non-exempt employee issue. It is unrealistic to create minimum hours for tour directors because it is the tour director's job to maintain the safety, welfare and

entertainment of travelers, and I can't think of anything more managerial than that," said Martin Elson, chair of NTA's government relations committee and president of Parker Tours. "It is clear they are managers and should be exempt employees."

In their letter, the tour associations said the tour industry has been plagued by litigation over the appropriate employment classification of tour directors. "We support standards clarifying that the occupation of tour director — a vital and necessary component of all packaged tours — is precisely the type of employee that ought to be exempt," they wrote.

The NTA is an organization of nearly 4,000 tourism professionals representing the packaged travel industry. The USTOA is comprised of more than 800 leading tour companies.

**THE DOCKET**

**More bad news for operators in California**

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — In California, it rains higher taxes and it pours fee increases for motorcoach companies and other operators of commercial vehicles.

A bill now making its way through the state legislature would increase weight fees for commercial vehicles by 42 percent effective Dec. 31.

That means a 48,000 pound motorcoach coach would see its gross weight fee increase by \$404 annually, going from \$948 to \$1,352. The weight fee for a 40,000 pound coach would jump \$357.

Weight fees are part of the state vehicle registration fee structure. In California, commercial vehicle registration fees are based on a vehicle's declared operating weight.

The proposed weight-fee change would be in addition to the tripling of vehicle licensing fees that go into effect Oct. 1. As reported in the July 15 issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*, vehicle licensing fees are being returned to 2 percent of the vehicle value later this year. For the past five years, the licensing fee has been 0.65 percent of the value.

A coach company that has been paying \$15,000 annually in vehicle licensing fees will see that number go to more than \$45,000.

The bad news doesn't end there. The bill (AB 1767) that proposes increasing weight fees also contains a provision that would index certain other fees imposed by the California Department of Motor Vehicles for various transactions.

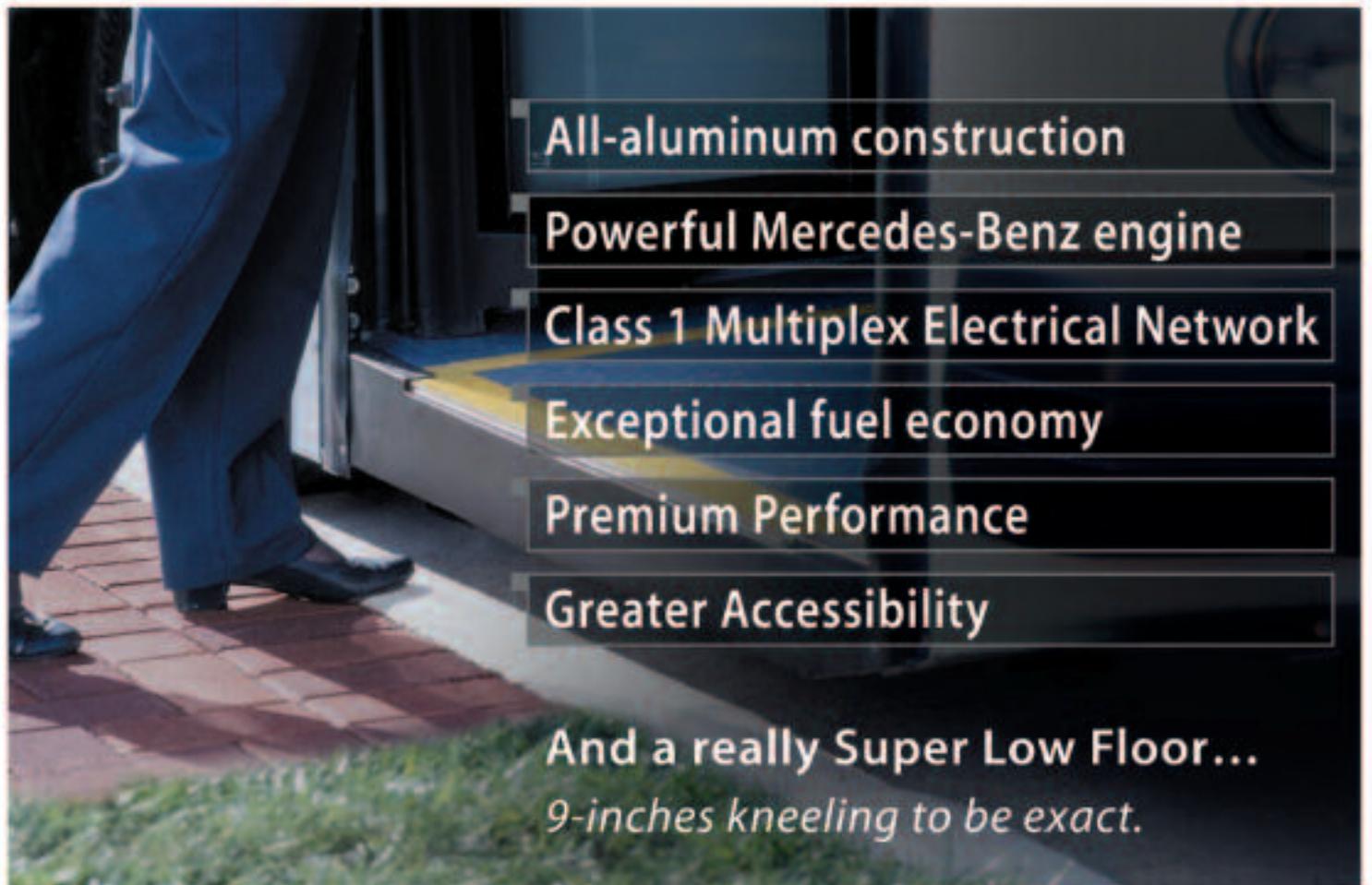
In other words, the fees would go up automatically each year, beginning in 2005, at the same rate as inflation.

To pass, the weight-fee legislation requires a two-thirds vote from both houses of the legislature. It already has passed the General Assembly and is slated for Senate action next. The Senate has until September to act on the bill.

**Sample Proposed Fees**

Gross vehicle Weight range	Fee
10,001-15,000	\$371
20,001-26,000	\$623
30,001-35,000	\$926
40,001-45,000	\$1,194
45,001-50,000	\$1,352

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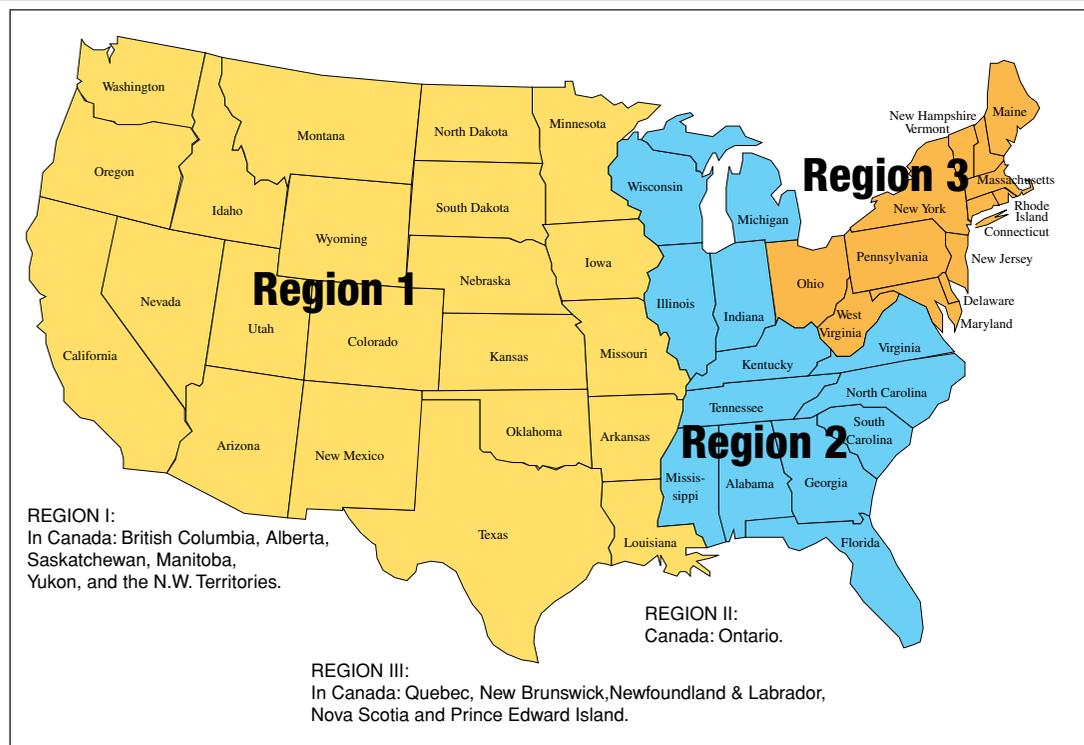
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# THE DOCKET



## Deadline near for UMA board

WASHINGTON — Sept. 1 is the deadline for letters of nomination for the board of directors of the United Motorcoach Association.

One director will be elected from two of UMA's three membership regions (see accompanying map), while two directors will be elected from the third region. All four seats being filled are the result of expiring three-year terms of incumbent directors, who may seek re-election.

The directors whose seats expire this year are: Region I (The West): Todd Holland of Ramblin' Express in Colorado Springs; Region II (The Midwest): Dave Brown of Holiday Tours in Randleman, N.C., and Brian Scott of Escot Bus Lines in Largo, Fla., and

Region III (The Northeast): Mitch Guralnick of Victoria Bus in Boston.

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

Nominations must come from among UMA active members, who are motorcoach operators. Nominations are open to any person who officially represents 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 mid-year director meetings.

Written letters of nomination

must state the candidate's name, company affiliation and home-base location. Letters of nomination also must be postmarked no later than Sept. 1, 2003. The UMA Nominating Committee will certify eligibility of each candidate 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*.

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

## ABA president asks senators to support industry initiatives

WASHINGTON — The president and CEO of the American Bus Association has called on Congress to weave the motorcoach industry into the larger fabric of the national transportation network by making small, targeted investments in the industry.

"The needs of the private bus industry are small but the payoff to the traveling public is great," Peter Pantuso said in testimony late last month before a subcommittee of the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee. The committee hearing was called to address the issue of enhancing private participation in providing public transportation.

Pantuso asked committee members to be cognizant of public transit agencies that illegally provide charter services to the public in contravention of Federal Transit Administration charter rules. Congress needs to insure fairness in competition and level the playing field, he said.

"Publicly funded transit systems and public officials are attempting to 'move in' on transportation operations that the private sector provides efficiently and cost effectively," Pantuso said.

"Our industry is in a unique position," Pantuso told the committee. While public transit systems, the airlines and Amtrak provide critical services, it is not without a hefty subsidy from the federal government and the nation's taxpayers.

"Yet," Pantuso said, "motorcoaches actually carry more passengers than the airlines and Amtrak combined — 774 million passengers annually, providing a variety of services to more than 5,000 communities nationwide."

In his remarks, Pantuso listed a handful of initiatives he said could enhance coach industry participation in public transportation, including the need for increased funding for ADA

wheelchair compliance.

"The Americans with Disabilities Act requires virtually all scheduled-service coaches to be equipped with wheelchair lifts by 2012," Pantuso said. According to several studies, the annual cost to the industry is \$40 million, yet the grant program developed to assist the industry is funded at only \$7 million. The need for additional funds is clear."

Pantuso cited a similar need for a dedicated source of funding to create a network of intermodal passenger facilities across the U.S. Such facilities provide seamless intercity and local public transportation, and spawn economic development.

The Bush Administration's highway reauthorization proposal, SAFETEA, contains a provision to establish a federal fund of \$85 million for the development of intermodal passenger facilities, while the House transportation bill seeks \$100 million for intermodal centers. Pantuso asked the banking committee to include the provision in its highway reauthorization bill.

Pantuso also asked for more funds for rural bus service. "There had been a decline in rural intercity bus service for 30 years, when more than 20,000 communities lost bus service. But the existence and success of the Section 5311(f) rural over-the-road bus program in the mid 1990s reversed the decline and in some areas of the country has increased rural intercity bus service," Pantuso noted, adding that funding for the program should be increased.

He also asked senators to support initiatives that would allow motorcoaches to share parking facilities with transit buses as a means of providing additional coach parking in city centers and reducing the need for costly separate parking lots, inclusion of private operators in planning projects, and more flexibility in idling rules.

## Public agencies seek private charter firms

The following public transit providers have informed the United Motorcoach Association of their intent to provide charter service unless willing and able private charter operators step forward to offer their services, or to bid on contract opportunities.

Operators are urged to respond to these public notices:

Danbury, Conn. Deadline: Aug. 6, 2003. Write to: Richard

Schreiner, Director of Service Development, Housatonic Area Regional Transit District, 62 Federal Road, Danbury, CT 06810. Phone: (203) 744-4070.

Troy, Ohio. Deadline: Aug. 7, 2003. Write to: Executive Director, Miami County Transit, 1695 Troy-Sidney Road, Troy, Ohio 45373. Phone: (937) 335-7921.

Grayling, Mich. Deadline:

Aug. 31, 2003. Write to: Manager, Crawford County Transportation Authority, 4276 West North Down River Road, Grayling, Mich. 49738. Phone: (517) 348-8215.

Ashtabula, Ohio. Deadline: Sept. 2, 2003. Write to: Manager, Ashtabula County Transportation System, 4332 Main Ave., Ashtabula, Ohio 44004. Phone: (440) 994-2003.

# Texas greatly expands roadside bus inspections

AUSTIN, Texas — A roadside bus inspection program that was tested in Texas for three months beginning late last year has been expanded to 25 inspection sites across the state.

The Texas Department of Public Safety instituted the program in December, following a series of high-profile bus crashes in Texas over a 15-month stretch.

During the three-month test, bus inspections were performed at 5 state weigh stations. That number is growing to at least 25 statewide.

All charter, tour and scheduled-service buses must stop whenever a sign announcing the inspections is posted at the sites.

In the past, Texas typically has inspected buses at terminals and destination points. The state has never had a regular roadside inspection program. The random terminal and destination inspection program will continue.

The expanded roadside program is being supported by the Texas Bus Association, which represents eight over-the-road bus operators, including Greyhound

Lines.

“Bus travel is the safest mode of transportation but we always seek to increase safety,” said Jerry Prestridge, executive director of the association. “This program targets the carriers with the greatest safety risk, while at the same time implementing procedures designed to minimize passenger inconvenience.”

Texas Department of Public Safety Maj. Coy Clanton said the agency decided to expand the program after the pilot project uncovered plenty of violations. He said he believes the program has heightened the industry’s awareness of the need to meet safety requirements.

During the pilot program, which ended in March, 218 buses were inspected and 16 drivers and 17 buses were put out of service for safety and other violations.

One of the first inspections resulted in the arrest of a charter-bus driver on suspicion of driving while intoxicated on Interstate 45 north of Houston in Walker County.

DPS spokesman Tom Vinger

said driver violations included not having valid commercial driver licenses and logbooks. The vehicle violations included defective turn signals, cracked rims and inoperable emergency exits.

During the inspections, most of which will continue to be conducted at weigh stations, DPS

***‘During the pilot program, 218 buses were inspected and 16 drivers and 17 buses were put out of service.’***

troopers examine the driver’s commercial license, medical certificate and logbook. Buses will receive different levels of scrutiny that will focus on equipment such as brakes, lights, tires and safety features, DPS officials said.

The vehicles are being inspected at sites with easy access to restrooms, phones, food, secure

waiting areas and medical facilities.

Prestridge and others in the industry were concerned initially that the inspections would inconvenience and possibly endanger passengers, and delay buses. But those concerns haven’t come to pass, Prestridge said.

“Knowing there could be an inspection of a bus will make that bus company more cognizant of maintaining the bus in a safe condition and being sure the driver is qualified,” Prestridge noted.

“Terminal and destination inspections will continue but expanding our enroute program to additional locations around the state will give us one more tool to assure buses and bus drivers are operating safely,” added Randall Elliston, chief of the Texas DPS Traffic Law Enforcement Division.

## Bus inspection sites

Here are the roadside bus inspection stations.

- Interstate 20, eastbound and westbound, at Mile Post 546 near Tyler.
- I-20, eastbound and westbound, nine

miles west of Odessa.

- Interstate 30, eastbound and westbound, at Mile Post 158 near Mount Pleasant.
- Interstate 10 eastbound one mile east of the Brazos River near Brookshire.
- I-10 westbound one mile west of the Brazos River near Sealy.
- I-10, eastbound and westbound, at Mile Post 812 west of Winnie.
- I-10, eastbound and westbound, near Kingsbury.
- I-45 northbound at Mile Post 101 near New Waverly.
- I-45 southbound 0.7 miles north of Centerville.
- U.S. 281, northbound and southbound, near Falfurrias.
- I-35, northbound and southbound, at Devine.
- I-35 southbound 1.3 miles north of San Marcos.
- I-35 northbound 2.5 miles north of San Marcos.
- I-40, eastbound and westbound, near Shamrock.
- U.S. 59 northbound near Hungerford.
- U.S. 59 southbound near Sugar Land.
- U.S. 77 near Riviera.
- U.S. 287 north of Childress.
- U.S. 87 at Grape Creek near San Angelo.

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## Operators need strong associations

### UMA CEO advocates state level action

ATLANTA — Victor Parra, president and chief executive of the United Motorcoach Association, says coach companies need aggressive state associations to fend off efforts by politicians and bureaucrats to impose new taxes and fees.

"We need strong state associations," Parra told members of the Georgia Motorcoach Operators Association at their annual meeting here last month. "We're in for the fight of our lives. Every governor is facing deficit spending. And some are in the political fight of their lives," often because of the budgetary situation in their state, Parra noted.

"We will need to tell our story forcefully, convincingly and passionately. We need to say how much money we contribute to the local economy and the tax base of that state.

"We need to involve our partners in these fights — the hotels, destinations, conven-

tion and visitor bureaus," Parra continued. "If we're overly taxed that affects their customers."

When state and local governments boost fees and taxes paid by coach companies, and operators are forced to raise prices, that results in many coach travelers having less to spend for the trip, Parra said. "It means less that they spend at their hotel, at their destination or anywhere else they go."

"Unfortunately, these are challenging times and I don't see any immediate relief in the near future," Parra said. "A strong Georgia Motorcoach Operators Association that's focused on the needs of its members can become a vital resource for all of you in this room."

In his remarks, Parra cited a long list of fee and tax increases imposed this year on operators across the U.S. In many cases, the increases came in states lacking a state motorcoach association.

Parra also provided an

update on issues facing the coach industry on Capital Hill.

Topics surfaced by Parra included the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration proposal to study bus crashes to get a better fix on causes and the highway and public transportation reauthorization bill.

The crash study, should the FMCSA decide to under take it, will be far reaching and doubtless focus on crashes resulting from driver error, Parra said.

The Bush Administration's massive *Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act* of 2003, or SAFETEA, contains numerous provisions that will impact the coach industry, said Parra.

But he indicated it is unlikely the bill will pass this year — even though the current law expires in October. "I don't think it will happen this year," he said.

Parra believes the current law will be extended through continuing resolutions — as happened with the federal budget at the end of last year.

## Feds clear out pile of proposed rules

### Schemes dating back 10 years hit dumpster

WASHINGTON — The Department of Transportation has decided to trash a handful of regulatory initiatives aimed in large measure at the coach industry.

The decision to withdraw the proposed rulemakings is part of an initiative by Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta to resolve long-pending regulatory proposals by either bringing them to completion or eliminating them.

In some cases, the proposed regulations had been hanging around for more than a decade and represented a investment of thousands of manhours and hundreds of thousands of dollars.

At the same time, the department says it has taken steps to improve its rulemaking process, including creating an effective tracking system for significant rulemakings to ensure they are either completed in a timely manner or the delays are identified and fixed. Through the tracking system, a monthly Internet-accessible report is available to the public. Go to <http://regs.dot.gov>.

Four of the terminated Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration rulemakings deal with sleeper berths, operation of television receivers and data display terminals on coaches, an English-language qualification requirement for drivers, and out-of-service criteria.

The proposed rule relating to out-of-service had to do with a scheme to incorporate the North American Uniform Out-of-Service Criteria into the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations. FMCSA officials decided that trying to fit the criteria into federal regulations would create all sorts of problems, not the least of which would be the difficulty of keeping the regulations up to date to reflect changes in buses and trucks. So, the rule was dumped.

Seven years ago, the FMCSA's predecessor agency proposed eliminating a federal law that prohibits drivers from watching TV while driving. The law even requires that controls for on-board televisions be located where the driver

cannot operate them without leaving his or her seat.

The law was enacted in the early 1950s when it was feared TVs would be mounted where drivers could watch and become distracted. That problem never materialized — largely because owners aren't stupid, they recognized the inherent safety risk of allowing drivers to watch TV while driving.

Meanwhile, new technology came along in the form of communication systems, dash-board displays and Intelligent Transportation systems that use small TV-like monitors to communicate information. There was concern the 1950s-era law would prohibit the use of the new systems. That hasn't happened, of course. The displays are now commonplace.

Nevertheless, the FMCSA decided it likes the idea of keeping the old law designed to prohibit unsafe driver behavior, but it doesn't think it will discourage the use of the new technologies that employ display screens.

Still, there remains lingering concern that the new displays are distracting. Lancer Insurance, for example, says that while it applauds the FMCSA's efforts to be flexible, it remains uneasy about the potential safety problems with systems that have drivers splitting their attention between driving and reading computer-generated messages.

Additionally, the FMCSA has trashed a 1994 proposed rule covering the use and design of driver sleeper berths used in motorcoaches. "At this time, FMCSA chooses not to establish design-restrictive regulatory standards for the use of sleeper berths on motorcoaches without authoritative research to guide their development," the agency said.

Also headed to the dumpster is a proposed rule that would make changes to a provision in federal safety regulations involving English.

The FMCSA concluded there is no quantifiable data on which to propose modifying existing regulations to require a more stringent English-speaking standard, or to require the states to administer a specific test for English proficiency. This proposed rule dated back to early 1997.

## FMCSA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ority of the United Motorcoach Association and others in the over-the-road bus industry for years. Despite the added regulatory burden imposed on operators, the ability to get meaningful hiring information and to have protection for providing factual information about a former employee is seen as a better-than-even trade-off.

In announcing its proposal, the FMCSA said the rules would put a limitation on the liability of those who are required to provide and use driver safety performance information. If adopted, the rules would enable motor carriers to obtain and use more complete driver background information.

By using the information, says the FMCSA, employers can better assess the potential safety risks of new employees. However, the proposed rules also require prospective employers to advise driver applicants that they can review, request correction or refute what a previous employer provides in the driver's employment history.

Under the proposal, a previous employer would be required to respond within 30 days to

inquiries from prospective motor carrier employers about former drivers. The requirement would extend for three years after a driver has left a previous employer.

At a minimum, former employers will be required to provide:

- Information verifying a driver worked for that employer and the dates of employment.
- Information indicating whether a driver was involved in any reportable accidents.
- A driver's three-year alcohol and controlled substance history.
- Information indicating whether a driver failed to complete a drug or alcohol rehabilitation referral prescribed within the previous three years, but only if that information is recorded with the responding previous employer.
- Information indicating that a driver illegally used alcohol and controlled substances after having completed a rehabilitation referral, but only if that information is recorded with the previous employer.

The proposal increases from two to three years the period during which previous employers must provide information regarding violations of the federal regulations relating to alcohol and

controlled substances.

The proposal also requires employers to retain reportable accident information for three years. Currently, they have to keep such information for one year.

The proposed rulemaking is part of an aggressive effort by Administrator Sandberg to clear out a backlog of rules that Congress ordered the FMCSA to develop during the past half-dozen or more years.

In this case, the FMCSA is fulfilling its obligations under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, adopted more than five years ago.

The proposed rules will apply to all motor carriers subject to Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations.

The complete rules are available on the Internet at <http://fmcsa.dot.gov>. Or, search for docket number FMCSA-97-2277 at <http://dms.dot.gov>.

Written comments on the proposal should be sent by Sept. 2, to the USDOT Docket Facility, Attn: Docket No. FMCSA-97-2277, Room PL-401, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590-0001. Comments may be submitted electronically at <http://dms.dot.gov>.

## Johnson

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

to keep the wolves at bay and what he thinks other operators should be doing.

"Most operators in Houston are saying 'I've got to slash my prices' and I'm telling them 'No, you don't,'" says Johnson. "Lowballing prices just to get a coach on the road doesn't help anybody."

According to Johnson, operators that price trips too low — just to get business — are pricing themselves right out of business. Additionally, they won't have the reserves to pay for unexpected but inevitable costs or repairs, and they won't have enough cash for preventative maintenance.

This is not the time to take rates back to what they were years ago, says Johnson. "It's hard to get (operators) to understand that if we all stick to prices (that earn a profit), then we all make money," he argues.

Johnson says the way to compete with operators that continue to drop prices below the level of profitability is to stress service, dependability and reputation. "Show your proof of insurance, list the benefits of being a member of UMA and ABA, and emphasize your DOT safety rating," he says.

Johnson was elected a director

of the United Motorcoach Association last year.

Callers to J&J Charters get a 10-point checklist of questions to ask before purchasing motorcoach services, and Johnson urges customers to visit the coach operators they are considering hiring. "If we can get them to visit, we are going to sell them...whether we are higher in cost or not," he says.

Keeping everything — from the landscaping to the stationery — immaculate and professional is critical to securing business, Johnson says, noting that in today's operating environment, everything is about survival. "Success right now is avoiding bankruptcy."

Johnson also is an advocate of keeping communication lines open — even when the message you have to deliver isn't what the listener wants to hear. For example, finance companies are calling more often to get an update. "They don't want the equipment back," he says, but they do want to know what you're doing to keep the business afloat.

There are more options than many operators might think when it comes to working with finance companies, says Johnson. He suggests asking for a reduced payment schedule through the lean months, requesting current payments be moved to the end of the note or looking at a complete

restructuring of the loan.

Let them know what you're doing to increase bookings, or that next month's bookings look good, and that you've got a future revenue stream coming. Develop a plan that both of you can live with, and let your finance company know what you can pay and when.

"Most finance companies are willing to work with you as long as you talk to them," says Johnson. "When they can't reach you and you don't return their calls...you don't want to go there."

He also advises against taking cost-cutting shortcuts because they'll come back to haunt you. Those companies that operate without insurance, or are underinsured, will be stripped bare when the inevitable accident happens, he says.

There have been days when too many, or even all, of Johnson's coaches were sitting in the yard. He has considered downsizing his fleet, the majority of which are 1997 or newer coaches, but he's working hard to avoid that step.

"It's a tough industry," he says. "You just have to decide, 'Hey I'm going to be here' and we'll suffer through the bad times. Those that hang in there are those that will do pretty good when things turn around."

## Trailways adds new members in Tennessee, South Dakota

FAIRFAX, Va. — The Trailways Transportation System has added two members to its charter and tour division, Gentry Trailways of Knoxville, Tenn., and Prairie Coach Trailways of Dell Rapids, S.D.

William Gentry, president of Gentry Trailways, was born into a bus family. His uncle was a Trailways agent and his father started a school bus firm in 1953.

Gentry Trailways still operates school buses and is celebrating its 50th year in that business. In 1991, Gentry started buying motorcoaches and has built a strong charter business serving seniors, children, athletic teams and the University of Tennessee.

Gentry said he joined Trailways because "there is credibility that goes with the name. Trailways has been around for over 67 years and we have been around for 50. I think we make a great team."

Prairie Coach Trailways is a community- and team-oriented company that has made its mark providing VIP and executive transportation services.

Company President Bill Connor founded Prairie Coach five years ago with one VIP motor-

coach. Today, the company has a fleet of 10 coaches.

Earlier this year, Connor purchased the tour division of the South Dakota Farmer's Union and is looking to expand its tour business. "The Farmer's Union has more than 50 years of experience in the motorcoach tour business, and we're excited about the growth potential," Connor said.

Prairie Coach Trailways also provides charters for schools, churches and colleges, as well as five semi-professional sports teams.

## Milestone

Vansco Electronics Ltd., the Winnipeg, Manitoba-based manufacturer of controls, instruments and systems for the bus and other industries, is celebrating its 25th anniversary. The company product line ranges from individual electronic parts to completely integrated systems, including the Vansco Multiplexing System. Annual sales are \$100 million. The company expects to reach \$200 million in sales within two years and \$400 million by 2008.

Learn more about Vansco and its products at [www.vansco.ca](http://www.vansco.ca).

## New hub covers cover axle, lugs

GURNEE, Ill. — RealWheels Cover Company Inc. has introduced new "Cover-Up" hub covers with a low-profile design for aluminum wheels.

The RealWheel caps are the only system that covers the axle and lug nuts, and feature the company's patented "Thread Lock" Bracket. The bracket eliminates the need to remove the lug nuts to install the covers since the "Thread Lock" Bracket fits over them, making installation easy.

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## INDUSTRY NEWS

# Safety in numbers

Last month, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration released its annual report on highway accidents and once again the report was absent any meaningful information on the safety record of the coach industry.

NHTSA routinely collects and reports safety data — in great detail — on passenger cars, large trucks, pickup trucks, vans and sport utility vehicles, but it largely ignores buses. It does this despite the fact that buses transport upwards of 700 million people annually, more than the airlines and Amtrak combined, according to a study conducted three years ago for the ABA.

In its 110-page 2002 Annual Assessment of Motor Vehicle Crashes, NHTSA devotes two footnotes on two pages to bus accident reporting. On page 21, *Occupants Killed in Motor Vehicle Crashes by Type of Vehicle*, NHTSA lumps buses with 'Other Vehicles.\*\*' The two asterisks guide you to a footnote where you learn that the 'other vehicles' category includes farm equipment, construction equipment, buses and other unspecified types of vehicles.

Obviously, the Other Vehicles category in the report is worthless. NHTSA says that 467 people died last year in 'other vehicles.' But there is no way of knowing how many of those individuals died because they were involved in a rollover bus accident, a rollover tractor accident, a rollover front-loader accident or a rollover accident in a dune buggy.

Incidentally, the 'other vehicles' category had the biggest percentage increase of any of the five tracked by NHTSA. That fact alone argues for a detailed breakdown of the numbers. Only then can the nature of the increase be pinpointed and addressed.

For the better part of a decade, the over-the-road bus industry has justifiably touted its safety record. The industry needs to exercise caution, of course, in its claims. Three times during the past decade, the U.S. commercial airline industry has gone through an entire year without a single fatality, including last year.

It is surprising to some that there aren't more coach crashes in the U.S. After all, the industry is in a period of major stress that might augur more crashes, not better safety.

Despite the fact it is difficult to get an overall fix on the industry safety record because of the dearth of information, there are encouraging signs.

In June, 515 coaches were inspected as part of Roadcheck 2003, the giant roadside inspection exercise conducted annually under the aegis of the CVSA. Last year, 334 buses were checked. The 500+ buses inspected this year resulted in a remarkably low out-of-service rate. Fewer than 9 percent of the coaches were put out of service and only 1.7 percent of the drivers. That compares with 12 percent of the buses and 9.5 percent of the drivers placed out of service last year.

No one has a good explanation for the improvement. Here are a couple of possibilities, however. With travel down, many older coaches have been parked. That factor, combined with the record number of new coaches added by operators during the years leading up to the downturn, means the overall fleet is better and newer.

Finally, during stressful times, most people tend to focus their attention better, and that frequently adds up to a re-emphasis of the fundamentals, like safety. Let's hope that continues even as the industry bounces back.

## Tough reading: Your property insurance policy



Tom DeMatteo

By Thomas D. DeMatteo  
Vice President & General Counsel  
ABC Companies

Reading and understanding an insurance policy is extremely difficult because of the arcane language and the use of words that have meaning particular to the insurance business. So, I thought I'd explain the typical structure of a policy so you can understand what it usually contains.

All policies consist of four sections: Declarations, insuring agreements, exclusions and conditions. The declaration page provides fundamental information, like the named policy holder, who the insurance company is, the limits, types of coverage and the premiums. It also contains policy numbers, policy periods, deductibles and the type of insurance plan, including additional insureds.

The next section generally contains the agreement of the insurance company about what subjects of insurance are covered in the policy. There are two main areas in this section, one relates to property and the other relates to third-party liability.

There are two parts to a prop-

erty section: The type of property covered, and the perils insured against. Clearly you will be looking for the identification of the buildings and structures, including fixtures, machinery and equipment. You would then look for additional endorsements to cover personal property, such as equipment, furniture, property of others, newly acquired property and the like.

The next area in the property section identifies the perils insured against, such as fire, vandalism, storms and so on. You

**'You may need extended coverage for earthquakes and water damage.'**

may need extended coverage endorsements for earthquakes and water damage.

The liability section is where the insurance company agrees to pay for bodily injury or property damage of others. The injury must be caused by a covered occurrence and the occurrence must take place in the territory covered by the policy. This is also where you find the insurance company's duty to defend a lawsuit.

The next important area is the exclusions section. Under this section there will be two categories: Property excluded and per-

ils excluded. Some examples of property that is excluded are vehicles, aircraft, watercraft, crops, outdoor signs, fences and retaining walls, roads and paving.

Some examples of perils excluded are frost, cold weather, ruptures of water pipes, floods and earthquakes — in particular states. Keep in mind the exclusions can be brought back in under an insurance policy but it will likely cost you more money and would be included in an extended endorsement.

Typical exclusions in a liability policy are discrimination in employee matters, punitive damages, product liability and certain types of auto liability.

The conditions section contains cancellation provisions ranging between 30-60 days. It also outlines the policy-holder's duties in case of a loss or a claim under the policy, defines the territory of the policy and deals with such subjects as subrogation, other insurance and co-insurance.

Lastly, you should review your policy every year with your broker and keep your policy in a safe deposit box as part of your company's permanent records because many times neither the brokers nor insurance companies retain old policies.

Footnote: Practical Risk Management, ARM Tech, Vol. 1 (1998)

Thomas D. DeMatteo also is an adjunct professor of law at Hamline University School of Law in St. Paul, Minn.

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# Coach USA purchases get preliminary approval

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Transportation Surface Transportation Board has preliminarily approved the plan by a New York investment company to buy more than two-dozen Coach USA subsidiaries located in western and southern states.

Final Surface Transportation Board approval depends on whether comments are filed opposing Kohlberg & Company's purchase of the Coach USA operations. Opposing comments likely would trigger formal procedures and more critical consideration of the deal.

In its application seeking approval of the deal, Kohlberg & Co. revealed additional details about the proposed purchase that was announced in June.

Among other things, the 28 Coach USA units will be operated by a new company called CUSA. The simple name means the Coach USA buses acquired as part of the deal can easily have their livery converted to CUSA.

At the same time, however, CUSA has applied for 12 operating authorities from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to accommodate the 28 operating names under which it intends to carry on the business. The current federal operating authorities will be surrendered once the deal is completed.

Kohlberg has formed a new entity, KBUS Holdings LLC, to hold ownership of the Coach USA companies it is acquiring. Structurally, KBUS will be split into two units, a leasing company that will acquire and own all of the buses operated by CUSA, and



**What's wrong with this picture? The 28 Coach USA companies being purchased by Kohlberg & Co. of New York will operate under the name CUSA. The photo above has been electronically manipulated to show how CUSA's name might look on a former Coach USA bus.**

CUSA LLC, which will conduct the coach operations.

Such a dual structure is fairly common in the industry because there are tax advantages to having coaches centrally owned. The defunct consolidator VecTour used such a structure, and one industry leasing and finance executive said there are a number of companies operating 10 to 20 coaches structured similarly.

What isn't clear, however, is whether CUSA will be centrally managed or have a diversified operational structure.

The filing does provide — for the first time — a complete list of all of the Coach USA companies Kohlberg & Co. is acquiring. The companies are:

- All West Coachlines, Calif.
- American Charters & Tours, Texas
- Americoach Tours, Tenn.
- Antelope Valley Bus, Calif.
- Airport Bus of Bakersfield, Calif.
- Arrow Stage Lines, Arizona

- Bayou City Coaches, La.
- Ace Express, Colo.
- Browder Tours, Tenn.
- California Charters
- Desert Stage Lines, Calif.
- El Expreso, Texas
- Express Shuttle, Texas
- Franciscan Lines, Calif.
- Fun Time Tours, Texas
- Goodall's Charter Bus Service, Calif.
- Grosvenor Bus Lines, Calif.
- Gulf Coast Transportation, Texas
- Kerrville Bus Company, Texas
- Community Rentals Company
- Sunset Tours & Travel
- Vaught Bus Leasing Co.
- K-T Contract Services, Nevada
- PCSTC Inc. (Pacific Coast Sightseeing), Calif.
- Powder River Transportation, Wyo.
- Royal West Tours & Cruises, Calif.
- Stardust Tours-Memphis, Tenn.
- Texas Bus Lines
- Travel Impressions
- Valen Transportation, Calif.
- Worthen Van Service, Wyo.

Under federal law, the Surface

Transportation Board must approve and authorize a transaction if finds the deal to be consistent with the public interest, taking into consideration the effect of the transaction on the adequacy of transportation to the public, the total fixed charges that result, and the interest of affected employees.

In its filing with the Surface Transportation Board, Kohlberg/KBUS said the transaction will not reduce competitive options, adversely impact fixed charges, or adversely affect the interests of employees of the companies being acquired.

On the basis of the application, the board found the Coach USA-Kohlberg purchase was consistent with the public interest and should be authorized.

If opposing comments are filed by Sept. 8, however, the board finding will be vacated and a procedural schedule likely will be

adopted to reconsider the application.

If no opposing comments are filed, the board decision will take effect automatically and will become final. Board decisions and notices are available on its Web site: [www.stb.dot.gov](http://www.stb.dot.gov).

A copy of the Kohlberg/KBUS application may be obtained from its representative: Stephen Flott, Flott & Co., P.O. Box 17655, Arlington, VA 22216-7655.

Individuals wishing to oppose the application must submit their comments by Sept. 8, 2003. Send an original and 10 copies of any comments, referring to STB Docket No. MC-F-21000, to: Surface Transportation Board, 1925 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20423-0001.

In addition, send a copy of any comments to the Kohlberg/KBUS representative: Stephen Flott, Flott & Co., P.O. Box 17655, Arlington, VA 22216-7655.

## Coach USA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Stagecoach Group, said: "We are continuing to make excellent progress on the restructuring of Coach USA and this is a further milestone in the delivery of our North American strategy.

"We are now pressing ahead with the remaining elements of our disposal program. I believe we are well on track to achieve our objective of a smaller, but nevertheless substantial and more robust U.S. business focused on our successful operations in the northeast and north central regions," Souter said.

Eight months ago, Souter unveiled plans to completely restructure Coach USA, including

the sale of a number of units over a 12- to 18-month period. Since then, it has announced the sale of its transit division, plus its New England, South Central and West regions, along with taxi operations in Kansas City, Long Island and Indianapolis. A number of individual operations have simply been shut down.

Together with the sale of the Southeast region, Coach USA has realized more than \$270 million from the sale of the operations that were sold. Next on Stagecoach's agenda is the disposal of its Canadian region, as well as the remaining taxi businesses.

When all is said and done, what's left of Coach USA will be concentrated in Northeast and

North Central states, including New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Illinois and Wisconsin. Together, these operations accounted for about one-third of Coach USA annual revenue.

Coach USA sales for the year ended April 30, were \$972 million, down from \$1.1 billion in fiscal 2002. Operating profit was \$22.6 million, compared to \$61.3 million the year before, representing a drop in operating margin from 5.6 percent in fiscal '02, to 2.3 percent in fiscal '03. The decline in margins reflects the drop in company revenue, increased insurance costs and a significant fall in taxicab sales.

Stagecoach says it intends to develop the remaining Coach

USA businesses "that perform well and have predictable revenue streams," as well as reduce its charter and leisure-related business. "In addition, we have successfully retained key management and further reduced our corporate and regional overhead base," the company said.

The Scottish company also said that business conditions for Coach USA remain challenging "and we have not seen any major improvement in the trading (business) environment. Nevertheless, Coach USA remains cash generative and profitable. We have many strong performing businesses in the residual Coach USA portfolio and we are continuing to redeploy existing assets to maximize asset utilization

and to eliminate unnecessary capital expenditure."

The buyer of the Southeast region is an investment group composed of a newly formed affiliate of Lincolnshire Management Inc., Echo Bridge LLC and unidentified private investors. Sources said managers of the acquired companies may be given an opportunity to invest in the new organization.

Lincolnshire Management is a New York-based private equity fund manager. Since the company was founded in 1986, it has completed more than 45 acquisitions. Echo Bridge also is based in New York and invests in middle market companies in North America, the United Kingdom and Europe.

# Henlys names CEO, other top managers at Blue Bird

FORT VALLEY, Ga. — Henlys Group PLC, the Scarborough, England-based bus manufacturer that owns Blue Bird Corporation, has shuffled the top management at Blue Bird, including the naming of a new chief executive.

Jeffrey D. Bust has been appointed both president and CEO of Blue Bird, replacing Richard Maddox who moves to vice president and general manager of Blue Bird's important school bus business unit.

The appointment of Bust is the latest in a series of management changes at Blue Bird in recent months, including the naming of new top executives for the company's commercial bus division, the coach & RV unit, and quality and business improvement program.

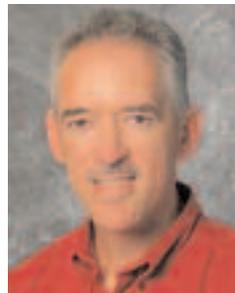
"Jeff Bust brings to Blue Bird the skills and experience needed to lead the implementation of the ambitious growth and product range expansion plans we have in place for the next few years," Henlys CEO Allan Welsh said in commenting on the changes.

Bust is a newcomer to both Blue Bird and the bus industry, but he is no stranger to challenges.

Most recently he was chairman and CEO of Grove Worldwide, a leading producer of mobile and truck-mounted hydraulic cranes and lifts. During his five years at Grove, Bust shepherded the company through Chapter 11 bankruptcy and its acquisition last year by The Manitowoc Co., the leading manufacturer of lattice-boom crawler cranes and tower cranes.

## Experienced team

The new team working with



**Jeffrey D. Bust, left, has been named President and CEO of Blue Bird Corporation, succeeding Richard Maddox who becomes head of Blue Bird's school bus operation. Barry Hines, above left, has been named to head the commercial bus division; Mike Beck, center, now heads quality and business improvement, while Wayne Joseph, right, leads the coach and RV unit.**

Bust at Blue Bird includes:

- Wayne Joseph, vice president and general manager of the coach & RV division.
- Barry Hines, vice president and general manager of the commercial bus division.
- Mike Beck, vice president of quality and business improvement.

Like Bust, Joseph is new to Blue Bird but he is a bus industry manufacturing veteran. He joined Blue Bird earlier this year from North American Bus Industries where he had been vice president and general manager of NABI's U.S. manufacturing operation in Anniston, Ala.

During his eight years at NABI, annual sales of the company's standard and low-floor heavy-duty transit buses went from \$15.3 million in 1994 to more than \$351 million last year.

Prior to NABI, Joseph was employed for 20 years by the old Flexible Corporation, where he was materials manager before spending nearly 10 years as plant manager.

Hines also has bus manufacturing in his blood. He has 20 years

experience in bus engineering and production, and his father, Frank, was the long-time president of the defunct Eagle Coach Corporation/Eagle International during the 1970s and 1980s. In the early 1980s, Barry Hines spent two years at Brownsville, Texas-based Eagle before joining Blue Bird in 1985 as a project engineer.

Earlier this year, Hines was promoted from engineering director to vice president and general manager of the Blue Bird unit that makes commercial and transit buses.

Beck joins Blue Bird from Ford Motor Co. where he was director of quality and customer satisfaction. Prior to that job, he had been vice president of quality and field operations at Otis Elevator. Earlier in his career, he held quality positions at Toyota North America and General Motors, where he spent several years working along side legendary quality management philosopher and guru Dr. W. Edwards Deming.

## Blue Bird veteran

Maddox, who became Blue

Bird's president and CEO in 1999, has been with the company for 29 years. He previously had been vice president of sales and marketing.

"During the past four years, we have made considerable progress at Blue Bird in new product development and in strengthening the management team," said Maddox. "Because of this, we are now well positioned to grow our business in the school bus market, the transit and shuttle bus market, the commuter and coach market, and the luxury motorhome market.

"We are confident this new business unit organization structure will improve our focus and our effectiveness toward our corporate goals of growth, operational excellence, and market leadership. At this stage, we believe Jeff Bust has the appropriate skills and experiences to lead the overall company during this robust period of growth and operational improvement."

## Annapolis grad

Bust began his professional career in the U.S. Navy after getting a degree in mechanical engi-

neering from the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md. Following his naval commitment, he attended Dartmouth College in Hanover, N.H., receiving an MBA before joining private industry.

Initially, Bust worked in contract engineering and operations management with a supplier of defense equipment. At one point, he led a project to build a plant for the manufacture of high-tech military systems.

He subsequently held a number of operational and general management positions with industrial equipment manufacturers before joining Grove Worldwide five years ago as president of its cranes division. He became chairman and CEO of the Shady Grove, Pa.-based company in 1999.

In 2001, Bust helped guide Grove through a Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing and financial restructuring. The reorganization plan reduced company debt from \$584 million to \$205 million. Annual interest expense plummeted from \$63 million to \$17 million.

During Bust's tenure, Grove introduced a number of new products, including mobile hydraulic cranes and aerial work platforms. Last year, Grove was acquired by another crane manufacturer, The Manitowoc Co., of Manitowoc, Wis., in a \$270 million deal involving cash and stock.

Blue Bird is nearing completion of a three-year-plus program to overhaul its product line, launching a new motorcoach and a handful of commercial, transit and shuttle buses. Blue Bird employs nearly 3,000 people in four facilities.

## James River

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

had town cars and shuttles." With the addition of Carey, James River now has those vehicles. In fact, it has nearly 40 vans, limousines, sedans and cutaway buses.

The corporate market, says Story, wants and expects better service, facilities and infrastructure — all things the company is better prepared to deliver.

Increased emphasis on the corporate market also meets a key criterion of James River's new strategy: It's not as sensitive to price. "You don't get beat up on price so bad," is the way Story puts it.

One of the new products James River developed is a local sightsee-

ing service. Similar to Gray Line, the service uses a 14-passenger Champion cutaway bus and is marketed through local promotional organizations and others. "It's not a huge volume of business, but it did better than expected," says Story.

Other expanding and new services at James River include:

- Contract services, including business and university-related shuttles.
- Relocation services, and working with meeting and planning services.
- The convention market.

"We're adding on piece by piece," says Story. "None of these are a home run but a bunch of base hits."

Still, not every new or expand-

ed initiative has been a hit.

On the operational side, Story has worked to blend the support services of the Carey operation and those of James River. Two areas of focus have been maintenance and safety. For instance, "our safety director functions for the whole organization."

Story is a big proponent of benchmarking. James River is a shareholder in International Motorcoach Network, allowing Story to benchmark against peer coach operators, and he has extended that exercise to a peer group in the Carey organization.

The new, broader approach at James River has been transformative, says Story. "We're a service company, not just a bus company."

## Motorcoach Network

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

critical for many motorcoach operators as the country seeks to return to some level of normalcy. ... As always, those who survive and prosper will be those operators who serve the needs of their customers most effectively."

From Aug. 21-24, National Motorcoach Network will have its 20th anniversary meeting in Branson, Mo., the Ozark Mountain community that has been a top motorcoach destination for more than a decade.

"The Network Invitational brings together motorcoach

charter and tour operators with suppliers from attractions, hotels, destination marketing organizations and industry vendors, such as manufacturers," says Kirchner. The meeting is limited to 100 suppliers.

In addition to its directory, the National Motorcoach Network also operates an Internet-based National Reservation Center at [www.motorcoach.com](http://www.motorcoach.com). The Web site handles motorcoach charter requests.

Information about the network and the 2003 Branson meeting is available by calling (888) 733-5287, or by e-mailing [nmn@motorcoach.com](mailto:nmn@motorcoach.com).

## Heavily used bridge in Maine is closed to commercial vehicles

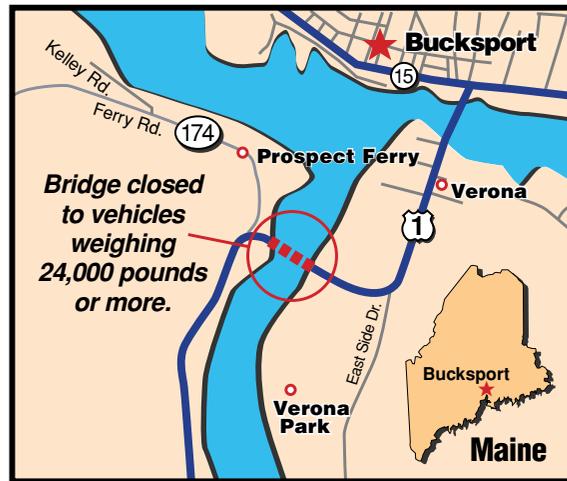
PROSPECT, Maine — A heavily used bridge near Maine's central coast has been closed to buses and other heavy vehicles, forcing them to take a 40-mile detour.

The 72-year-old Waldo-Hancock Bridge spans the Penobscot River on Routes 1 and 3, between Prospect and Verona.

Vehicles weighing 12 tons or more have been banned from the bridge while engineers and consultants consider short-term alternatives that might make it passable again for heavy vehicles. The outlook for a quick solution seems remote.

Upwards of 10,000 vehicles cross the bridge daily and that number can grow to 15,000 during the summer vacation season. It's estimated that as many as 800 heavy trucks and buses were using the bridge daily.

Most are driving north and crossing the Penobscot



River in Bangor, more than 20 one-way miles away.

The bridge was being renovated when engineers decided its support cables might be weaker than previously thought. Based on their recommendations, officials instituted the ban on heavy vehicles. The deck is supported by heavy cables composed of 1,369 wire strands. Supplemental cables are being considered.

## Coach parking expanded in Chicago; free parking!

CHICAGO — As part of its ongoing effort to better serve the coach industry, Chicago has expanded motorcoach parking near The Loop at McCormick Place, the nation's largest convention center. The lot is fenced, patrolled and available 24 hours daily.

Parking in the lot also can be free by using an incentive program.

"The motorcoach industry is extremely important to Chicago, so we are always trying to improve and expand our offerings," said Brad Lewis, vice president of tourism at the Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau. "This

new lot makes coordinating a motorcoach trip to Chicago that much easier because it is safe, accessible and affordable."

Overnight coach parking in the McCormick Place lot is \$20. However, if a hotel lead is issued and confirmed through the Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau, the bureau will rebate the parking costs with the receipt for each night the hotel stay coincides with the parking date.

The incentive is in addition to the \$20 in American Express gift checks for the driver and for the manager with a hotel lead confirmed through the bureau. The gift checks can be used to cover transportation costs, meals or other expenses.

The lot is just south of McCormick Place in the McCormick Place Truck Marshalling Yard at Lake Shore Drive and 31st Street, and is available daily except when very large trade shows are going on. For information on availability, call (312) 808-3165.

For more information, contact the bureau at (312) 567-8571, or e-mail Joleen Domaracki at [jdomaracki@choosechicago.com](mailto:jdomaracki@choosechicago.com).

## Eastern Bus fall meeting is next month in Annapolis

FAIRFAX, Va. — The regular fall meeting of the Eastern Bus Maintenance Management Conference will be late next month in Annapolis, Md.

The Eastern Bus Maintenance Management Conference is an organization of bus maintenance managers who gather twice a year in closed-door meetings to discuss key maintenance issues. More

than 100 bus companies are represented by the 200 plus members who attend the meetings. The roundtable discussions organized by Eastern Bus provide members with valuable information and technical support.

The session this year features a day-long tour of facilities operated by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. Confer-

ence attendees will visit WMATA's sprawling Bladensburg Overhaul Shop and its new training center. The Bladensburg facility was recently converted to service CNG-powered buses in a \$24 million renovation project.

Activities also include a vendor trade show, members/suppliers reception dinner, and the important Question and Answer round-

table session.

The conference will be Sept. 29-30 at the Radisson Hotel in Annapolis. The hotel is roughly 25 miles south of the Baltimore Washington International Airport.

For information, e-mail [LTBusOne@aol.com](mailto:LTBusOne@aol.com) or [Knewman@wmata.com](mailto:Knewman@wmata.com), or go to [www.ebmmc.org](http://www.ebmmc.org).

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**CALENDAR OF EVENTS****AUGUST 2003**

**5-6** Tennessee Motor Coach Assn.: annual Pig Pick'n. Featured events: Maintenance & Parts Marketplace and Maintenance Seminar. Radisson-Opryland, Nashville, Tenn. Info: (423) 348-1385.

**9-12** Pennsylvania Public Transportation Assn.: Summer Meeting and Rodeo, Erie, Pa. Info: (717) 234-7176 or go to [www.ppta.net](http://www.ppta.net).

**10-12** Alabama Motorcoach Assn.: Annual Meeting & Marketplace, Wynfrey Hotel, Birmingham, Ala. Info: (336) 495-4970.

**11-17** International Motorcoach Group Inc.: Strategic Alliance Meeting, Keystone Resort & Conference Center, Keystone, Colo. Info: (913) 906-0111 or go to [www.imgcoach.com](http://www.imgcoach.com).

**17-20** South Carolina Motorcoach Assn.: Annual Meeting & Marketplace, Westin Resort, Savannah, Ga. Info: (336) 495-4970.

**21-24** National Motorcoach Network: 20th anniversary Network Marketing Seminar & Invitational 100, Radisson Hotel, Branson, Mo. Info: (888) 733-5287 or go to [www.motorcoach.com](http://www.motorcoach.com).

**22-24** Greyhound Birthplace Bus Bash 2003, Hibbing, Minn. Info will be available at [www.bus-mag.com](http://www.bus-mag.com), click on Bus Bash link, or call (815) 946-2341.

**SEPTEMBER 2003**

**5-9** Virginia Motorcoach Assn.: Annual Convention, Dover Sheraton, Dover, Del. Info: (434) 376-1150, or go to [www.vamotorcoach.com](http://www.vamotorcoach.com).

**8-9** Bus Industry Safety Council fall meeting, Sheraton Springfield Monarch Place Hotel, Springfield, Mass. Info: Call the American Bus Association at (800) 283-2877, or go to [www.bus.org](http://www.bus.org).

**10** California Bus Assn: General Membership Meeting, LTBA, Calif. Info: (800) 664-2877 or go to [www.cbabus.com](http://www.cbabus.com).

**14-16** Kansas Public Transit Assn.: Annual Conference and Expo, Overland Park, Kan. Info: (913) 491-9094 or go to [www.ktransit.com](http://www.ktransit.com).

**29-30** Eastern Bus Maintenance Management Conference fall meeting, Radisson Hotel, Annapolis, Md. Info: Go to [www.ebmmc.org](http://www.ebmmc.org).

**OCTOBER 2003**

**1** The 13th Annual South Jersey

Transportation Authority Bus Rodeo, Atlantic City Transportation Center, Atlantic City. Info: (609) 344-4149.

**11-12** The Motorcoach Bus Society: Annual Convention, Boston, Mass. Info: Go to

[www.motorbussociety.org](http://www.motorbussociety.org), or e-mail Jerry Squier, vice president conventions, at [glsquier@pacbell.net](mailto:glsquier@pacbell.net).

**12-16** American Public Transit Association: Annual Meeting, Salt Lake City, Utah. Info: (202) 496-4800, or go to [www.apta.com](http://www.apta.com).

**17-22** Busworld, Kortrijk, Belgium. Info: Go to [www.busworld.org](http://www.busworld.org) or e-mail [info@busworld.org](mailto:info@busworld.org).

**26-28** BusCon 2003, Las Vegas. Info: (310) 533-2556 or e-mail [info@bobitexpos.com](mailto:info@bobitexpos.com).

**NOVEMBER 2003**

**1-5** California Bus Assn.: Convention & Trade Show, Doral Palm Springs Resort, Cathedral City, Calif. Info: (800) 664-2877 or go to [www.cbabus.com](http://www.cbabus.com).

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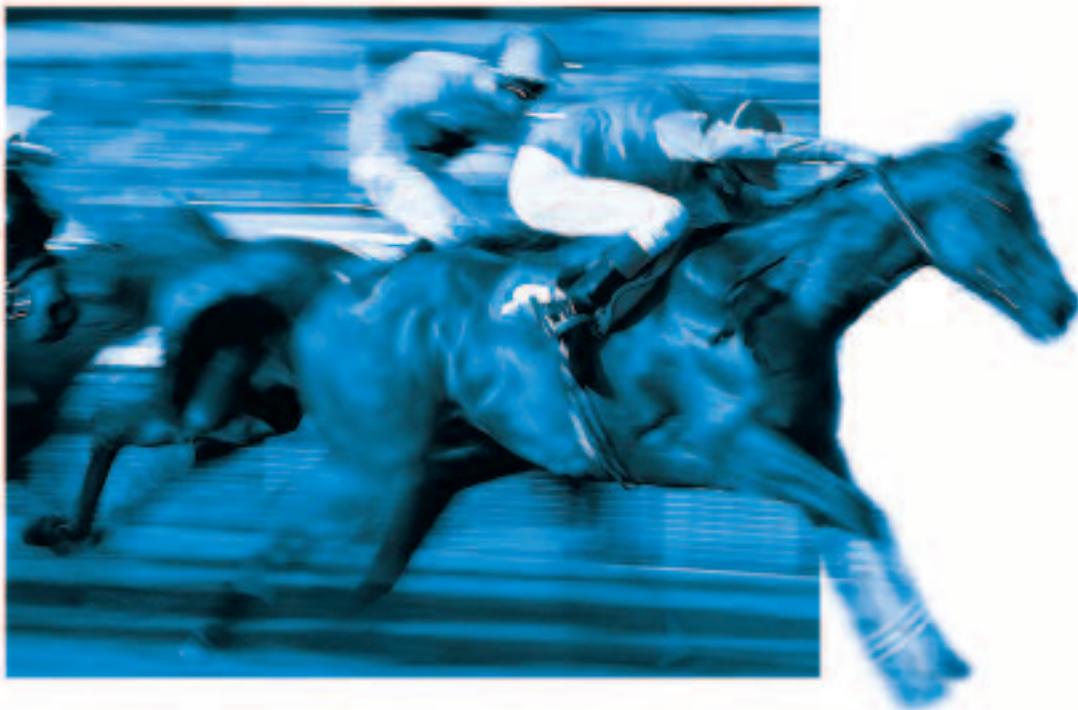
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