

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY



The DriveCam driving feedback system is one safety product insurance companies will help clients buy.

Insurance breaks for safety gear?

Don't count on it

It's one of the great conundrums of the motorcoach industry: Operators believe they should get financial incentives from their insurance companies for paying big bucks to install safety equipment on their buses.

But it seldom happens that way.

The fact is any motorcoach operator hoping to catch a break on its insurance rates by installing safety equipment has to be patient — very patient. The wait is usually measured in years, not months or weeks.

Operators can put fire suppression systems, backup video cameras, low-tire-pressure warning systems, electronic log books and a variety of other devices on their coaches, but they aren't likely to see any premium

adjustments until they can actually show a reduction in losses, which usually takes a year or longer.

There are exceptions.

Those operators that have added DriveCam, the palm-size cameras that record highway action outside the bus and driver action inside, can expect to see some cash much sooner.

A number of insurance companies are reimbursing their clients part of the cost of purchasing and maintaining the equipment, some paying as much as \$500 for each DriveCam unit installed in a motorcoach.

"We agreed to that product because it gives our claims department the picture that's worth 1,000 words to show true liability," said Michelle Silvestro, assistant

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

Landmark deal reached with APTA on charter service rules legislation

WASHINGTON — Nearly one year of difficult on-again, off-again negotiations with the American Public Transportation Association has produced an historic agreement on legislative changes to federal charter service rules.

The agreement provides for tougher enforcement of federal charter rules by the Federal Transit Administration and penalties that "fit the crime" when public transit agencies are found to be providing charter bus service that violates federal law.

"This is a new day," declared Becky Bentson Weber, managing director of a Washington-based lobbying firm and lobbyist for the National School Transportation Association.

The agreement contains virtually every provision being advocated by the Coalition of Private Transportation Associations, an ad hoc group formed last year to push private-sector passenger transportation initiatives on Capitol Hill and to negotiate with APTA on the thorny charter service rules issue.

The coalition is composed of representatives from the United Motorcoach Association, the American Bus Association, International Motorcoach Group, Trailways, Cal-

ifornia Bus Association, NTSA and nearly a dozen other national, regional and state groups that represent private bus, shuttle, taxicab and limousine operators.

A principal focus of the coalition negotiations with APTA was language in the Senate version of the long-delayed federal highway and public transportation bill that, among other things, would allow public transit agencies to expand their ability to provide charter bus service.

Here are the key provisions that were negotiated and that likely will become part of the giant highway and public transit reauthorization bill nearing completion in the House and Senate:

- When the Federal Transit Administration receives a complaint that a public transit agency is violating charter bus rules, the FTA or the U.S. Department of Transportation shall investigate and determine whether a violation has occurred.

The critical part of that provision is the requirement that the FTA or USDOT investigate every complaint and determine if a violation took place. Currently, there is no requirement that complaints have to be investigated or that a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Glitch could lead to ABA revote on unification with UMA

WASHINGTON — Members of the American Bus Association may have to revote on the consolidation of the association with the United Motorcoach Association.

UMA uncovered a technical glitch during its due diligence of ABA that could lead to another vote.

The ABA members of the joint ABA-UMA Consolidation Com-

mittee are prepared to recommend a revote to the ABA board of directors at its meeting in October, in an effort to clear up whatever doubt there may be over what is universally seen as a technical issue.

Here's what happened:

On May 2, both ABA and UMA announced their members had voted overwhelmingly to consoli-

date the two organizations — the ABA members by a 93 percent margin (237 to 16), and the UMA members by an 87 percent edge (207 to 30).

The technical glitch, discovered by attorneys for UMA after the voting, stems from ABA permitting the use of proxy ballots in the election even though its bylaws, at that time,

specifically prohibited them. Proxy ballots allow members to let other members vote their ballot for them.

Acting on legal advice, ABA took corrective action by retroactively modifying its bylaws to allow proxies, which is permitted under Washington D.C. law.

However, the UMA board of directors, expressing concern that

the corrective action could be questioned by someone who might want to challenge the unification at some future date, voted to demand a second vote by ABA members.

Officers from both associations say they expect that results of a new vote will be the same as the first because of the strong support the

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'Chinatown' coach lines expand into more areas

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The number of line-run companies that typically operate in and out of the Chinatown areas of major eastern cities is growing and reaching into new areas.

These so-called Chinese bus operators currently serve more than 40 U.S. cities, including nearly a dozen major corridors and along more than twice that many secondary routes.

One of the newest operators is Sky Express of Charlotte. Sky Express, whose owner is Lei Shi, has established service between Charlotte and New York City.

Here's a list of the Chinatown line-run operators that are promoted on various internet Web sites. The most comprehensive Web site for these companies and their schedules is at www.ivymedia.com.

The runs are identified by city pairs, with the names of companies serving the routes. There likely are others not on this list. All offer roundtrip service.

East Coast and Mid-Atlantic:

Boston / New York City

- Lucky Star Bus
- Boston Deluxe
- Fung Wah

New York City / Washington, D.C.

- Apex Bus (22 buses/day)
- Today's Bus
- New Century Travel
- Dragon Coach
- Washington Deluxe

Vamoose Bus New York City / Philadelphia

- Apex Bus (28 buses/day)
- Today's Bus

D.C. / Philadelphia

- Apex Bus

New York City / Rockville, Md.

- Apex Bus
- Today's Bus

New York City / Richmond, Va.

- Apex Bus

New York City / Norfolk, Va.

- Apex Bus
- Today's Bus

New York City / Baltimore

- Apex Bus (20 buses/day)
- Today's Bus

New York City / Atlanta, Ga.

- Apex Bus
- Today's Bus

Other East Coast destinations reportedly being served by Chinese/ American-owned bus companies: New York City-Albany, N.Y.; Boston-Hartford, Conn.; Hartford-New York City; New York City-Detroit; Washington-Baltimore; New York City-Wilmington, Boston-Providence, Charlotte, N.C.-New York City.

West Coast:

Los Angeles / Las Vegas

Los Angeles / San Francisco

San Francisco / Reno

San Francisco / San Jose

San Francisco / Oakland

USA Asia

London bus driver is resolute

LONDON — The driver of the double-decker bus that was involved in London's latest terrorist bombing has vowed to go back to work.

Mark Maybanks, 38, who was driving the No. 26 Stagecoach bus on a route from Waterloo to Hackney when it was involved in an incident in east London, said he

and his colleagues would get on with their jobs despite the two London bombings last month.

"Whatever they do, we are going to be back driving our buses. They are not going to beat us," said Maybanks.

"I've got a lot of feelings running round my head at the moment. It was a really frightening experi-

ence. My family were just pleased to get me back home in one piece. I need some time, but I definitely want to get back to work."

Maybanks, who went to work for Stagecoach 18 months ago, said that at the time of the incident his immediate concern was for his passengers. The bomb that exploded

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Built to go the route



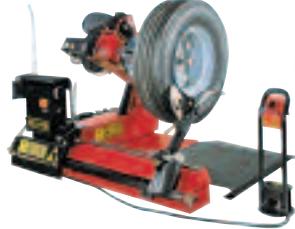
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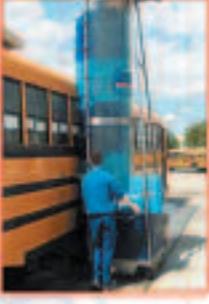
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THE DOCKET

Congress is set to approve daylight-saving extension

WASHINGTON — Congress wants to extend daylight saving time in the U.S. by four weeks but the idea has stirred up a busload of opposition.

The move to change daylight saving time took a big step last month when lawmakers from both houses agreed to add a daylight saving provision to the giant energy bill now before Congress.

The nation's bus industry has a huge stake in the issue, which has been controversial since Benjamin Franklin first proposed it in 1784 as a way to save candles.

The proposed change would

primarily impact pupil transportation services because more children would have to be bused to school in the dark.

Transit and commuter systems also would be affected because more of their morning passengers would have to wait for their rides in the dark.

At the same time, the bus industry's leisure and travel sector might benefit. Many experts say that with daylight saving time Americans generally spend less time in their homes. They travel, exercise more and spend additional time on recreational activities.

The last time daylight saving time changed in the U.S. was in 1986, when Congress extended it to seven months from six. Twelve years earlier, it had been extended during the Arab oil embargo as a way to conserve home heating oil and other oil-based products.

The issue resurfaced in May as part of the House energy bill. The proposal that's currently winning favor in Congress would start daylight saving time three weeks earlier, the second Sunday in March, and end it a week later, the first Sunday in November.

Currently, daylight saving time

begins at 2 a.m. on the first Sunday in April and ends at 2 a.m. on the last Sunday in October.

The idea, as always, has many loud critics. Parents groups and airlines are among those making the most noise about the proposed change. For example, the National PTA says more kids would go to school in the dark, raising the potential for more accidents or abductions.

David Prerau, author of *Seize the Daylight*, says the number of accidents involving kids going to school rose after daylight saving time was extended in 1986. How-

ever, he says, that was more than offset by a drop in accidents after school.

Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman has warned that a change would raise serious international "harmonization" problems for the transportation industry, meaning the airline industry. It would throw U.S. international air schedules further out of sync with Europe.

Even if Congress is able to get an energy passed containing a daylight saving time provision, there is no guarantee it will become law. The Bush Administration opposes the idea.

Charter notice is issued for 2007 skating event

SPOKANE, Wash. — A charter service notice issued by Spokane Transit for the 2007 State Farm U.S. Figure Skating Championships may give private operators heartburn.

The transit agency, which has been asked by event organizers to coordinate transportation for the champions, says charter service will be needed by many of those participating in the event.

In a letter to operators and the United Motorcoach and American Bus associations, and in a notice published last month in Spokane's daily newspaper, Spokane Transit said athletes, officials and judges are to be transported during the week-long event, Jan. 21-28, 2007.

Getting spectators to the championships will be the prerogative of Spokane Transit and its "open-door service," the agency noted.

Spokane Transit is having a meeting Aug. 5, to provide operators with details about the charter-

service opportunities. The session will be at 4:30 p.m. in the Southside Conference Room at Spokane Transit headquarters on Boone Ave.

A number of the requirements spelled out in the public notice issued by Spokane Transit could cause private operators grief. Among other things, the notice says that most of the buses needed for the charter service will be 20-passenger vehicles, but that "capacity requirements at peak times require additional or larger vehicles with more than one access door."

Additionally, "vehicles must be ADA-compliance accessible," and operators must have a minimum of \$10 million in liability insurance.

Coach companies willing and able to provide charter buses for the event have until Aug. 19, to respond to the letter and public notice. Questions should be directed to Steve Blaska, director of operations at Spokane Transit. Phone: (509) 325-6083.

Transits seek charter firms

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

Waldo County (Belfast), Maine. Deadline: Aug. 2, 2005. Write to: Edward J. Murphy,

Transportation Director, Waldo County Transportation Program, P.O. Box 130, Belfast, ME 04915. Phone: (207) 338-4769. A copy of the response also must be sent to: Maine Department of Transportation, Office of Passenger Transportation, SHS 16, Augusta, ME 04333.

Danbury, Conn. Deadline: Aug. 8, 2005. Write to: Richard Schreiner, Director of Service

Washington may vote on fuel tax hike

OLYMPIA, Wash. — It looks like residents of Washington may get a chance to overturn the 9½ cent fuel tax increase that was passed by the state legislature and signed by the governor earlier this year.

Opponents of the fuel-tax hike have turned in the last of more than 420,000 signatures on ballot-measure petitions, nearly double the number needed to force the issue onto a November ballot, Washington news outlets reported.

While the secretary of state's office still must verify that the campaign has sufficient valid signatures — roughly 225,000 are required — sponsors were confident voters would get a chance to vote on the increase that was passed by legislators and signed by Gov. Christine Gregoire in May.

The group, "No New Gas Tax," turned in nearly 190,000 signatures in one batch last month, and about 232,000 in another group.

The first three cents of the diesel fuel and gasoline tax increase kicked in July 1, raising the state's fuel tax to 31 cents a gallon. The rest is scheduled to be phased in over the next few years: 3 cents in 2006, 2 cents in 2007 and 1.5 cents in 2008.

But if voters approve the November initiative, the tax increase would be repealed, putting on hold a number of road repairs across the state.

Out-of-state operators register in Oklahoma, find big IFTA problems

OKLAHOMA CITY — Motorcoach operators trying to avoid high registration fees and/or property taxes in their home states by registering their coaches in Oklahoma may be in for a rude awakening.

The Oklahoma Corporation Commission reports that during the past year it has received International Fuel Tax Agreement license applications from a number of out-of-state charter bus companies.

The IFTA applications usually come to the state corporation commission after the company has purchased commercial license plates from one of Oklahoma's motor license agents, which are located throughout the state.

When the corporation commission staff reviews the IFTA application it becomes clear that operational control of the buses in question is not in Oklahoma. Since the International Fuel Tax Agreement specifically requires registration of qualified motor vehicles and operational control to exist in the same base jurisdiction, the application is being denied by Oklahoma officials.

That denial quickly turns into a financial shock for the operators.

EPA speeds low-sulfur fuel

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is offering an incentive to diesel refiners and importers to deliver ultra-low sulfur highway diesel earlier than required.

The incentive would allow

The problem, as it turns out, is that the charter bus company has already purchased Oklahoma tags for its buses and is not entitled to an Oklahoma IFTA account. The company then submits an IFTA application to the jurisdiction where operational control exists and gets denied because its vehicles are not registered in that jurisdiction.

To make matters worse, Oklahoma law does not allow a refund of registration fees in such situations. That means the coach operator can't get a refund for the registration fees it has paid to Oklahoma.

"To avoid this Catch-22 situation, operators should carefully review where their operation resides and is controlled. Then obtain your vehicle registration and IFTA license from the same jurisdiction," said Scott Greenawalt, regulatory program manager for the Oklahoma Corporation Committee.

"And to do that, you must ensure that both operational control exists and registration is obtained in the jurisdiction in which you desire to obtain your IFTA account," Greenawalt added.

refiners and importers to claim credit for all ultra-low sulfur diesel delivered into the distribution system before June 1, 2006, rather than just what is sold by that date.

Earlier in this decade, the EPA

Attacks on Greyhound drivers is focus of lawsuits

ATLANTA — Attorneys representing individuals injured and killed in a Greyhound bus crash nearly four years ago have charged that Greyhound failed for years to adequately protect its drivers from attacks by passengers.

In court documents, attorney Quinton Seay says there were about 60 incidents across the U.S. involving passengers attacking drivers or fighting for control of the Greyhound buses between May 1997 and October 2001.

“We were shocked when we determined how many incidents there were,” said Attorney Andrew Berke of Chattanooga, Tenn. “They were having attacks on drivers at a rate of over one every three weeks.

“Unfortunately, Greyhound failed to tell its drivers about these horrible attacks, so they were unaware what to do when there was a disturbance aboard the bus,” Berke told *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*.

Both Berke and Seay are suing Greyhound on behalf of clients killed or injured in the crash.

It was on October 4, 2001, when a Greyhound coach carrying more than 30 passengers flipped on its side after a passenger slit driver Garfield Sands’ neck with a box cutter.

Sands collapsed and his coach, traveling at about 70 miles per hour, crossed a median on I-24 near Manchester, Tenn., and ended up on its side. In all, seven people were killed, including the attacker. Sands survived.

The incident received widespread media attention at the time because it occurred less than a month after the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

Seay told the *Journal Constitution* that “Greyhound was aware that their bus drivers were vulnerable to attack and interference by its own passengers but chose not to respond to this threat.”

Berke charged that there were “systemic” safety problems on Greyhound coaches. He accused Greyhound and MCI of failing to install seat belts and driver shields

to protect drivers and passengers.

Court records filed by the attorneys show Greyhound had considered installing safety shields around its drivers but dropped the idea in 1998.

Less than a year after the Tennessee incident, a man stabbed a Greyhound driver, causing a wreck

on Interstate 5 north of Coalinga, Calif. That incident also resulted in the coach flipping and two women passengers being killed. (See July 1 issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Less than a year after that, Greyhound received its first grant from the U.S. Transportation Secu-

rity Administration to begin installing acrylic plastic shields to protect drivers and prevent attacks. (See Sept. 1 and Nov. 1, 2003 issues of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Contacted by the *Journal Constitution*, Warner Fox of Atlanta, an attorney for Greyhound, declined to discuss the attacks on Grey-

hound drivers and the number of incidents. “We don’t believe cases should be tried in the press,” Fox told the newspaper.

In court documents, however, Fox argues that the attack in the Tennessee incident was unforeseeable and something the driver couldn’t control.



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Low-sulfur fuel

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

issued two rules that require the use of lower-sulfur diesel fuel beginning next year for highway use and 2007 for off-road use.

The new standards will “yield enormous long-term benefits for public health and the environment,” the EPA said.

Bus driver

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

on Maybanks' bus did only minor damage and no passengers were injured.

"I'm very thankful that I got everyone off the bus successfully. That was my overriding priority. I just did what I thought needed to be done," he said.

Maybanks is urging his riders in London to keep using public transit. "We have a brilliant public transport system and the general public should keep on using it," he said.

"We are going to carry on doing what we are doing. It doesn't

matter how many times the terrorists try to knock us down, we will get back up again. We will be even stronger. They won't intimidate us and they won't beat us."

Barry Arnold, managing director of Stagecoach in London, said: "Our drivers are united in vowing to carry on with their jobs. We are proud of the commitment and determination every one of them has shown. We have been flooded with volunteers offering to help do whatever it takes to keep bus services running."

Stagecoach is the parent company of Coach USA and Coach Canada.

Charter services

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Development, Housatonic Area Regional Transit, 62 Federal Rd., Danbury, CT 06810. Phone: (203) 744-4070.

Erie, Pa. Deadline: Aug. 8, 2005. Write to: Dennis G. Solensky, Executive Director, Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority, P.O. Box 2057, Erie, PA 16512. Phone: (814) 459-4287.

Hattiesburg, Miss. Deadline: Aug. 8, 2005. Write to: Christine L. Brown, HPFL-MPO Manager, City of Hattiesburg, Department of

Urban Development, P.O. Box 1898, Hattiesburg, MS 39403. Phone: (601) 545-4593.

Bridgeport, Fairfield, Stratford and Trumbull, Conn. Deadline: Aug. 12, 2005. Write to: Director of Planning and Service Development, Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority, One Cross St., Bridgeport, CT 06610. Phone: (203) 366-7070.

Madison, Wis. Deadline: Aug. 6, 2005. Write to: Karen Meudt, Grants Accountant, Madison Metro Transit, 1101 E. Washington Ave., Madison, WI 53703. Phone: (608) 266-4904.

ABA revote

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

measure received during the initial balloting in April.

Meantime, the two trade groups are working to meet a self-imposed Dec. 31 deadline to complete the unification.

The joint unification Transition Committee worked almost daily for

the first six weeks following the vote but has since slowed its pace. The UMA Board voted in June to restrict the UMA Transition Committee Members from putting more resources into the consolidation effort until ABA conducts the proposed revote by its members. The restriction has since been rescinded.

"We started out really going after it and then we all realized we

could not keep up the pace," said UMA Chairman David Brown of Holiday Tours in Randleman, N.C. "I think we all are coming to the conclusion we are going to have to give up the deadline and just work at it until we get it done."

He was unable to say how long it will take, saying only that it would be completed as quickly as possible.

APTA deal

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

determination has to be made regarding a violation.

- If the FTA or USDOT decides a violation has occurred, the Secretary of Transportation shall correct the violation.

Currently, there is no requirement that corrective action be taken.

- If the FTA or USDOT finds a pattern of charter rules violation by a public transit agency, the agency or DOT shall bar the transit agency from receiving federal transit assistance in the amount the Secretary of Transportation considers appropriate.

This provision also marks a major change. Currently, the law only provides for cutting off all federal assistance to a public transit agency found violating charter service rules. Such a step is not believed to have ever been taken

because of the draconian implications for the public transit agency.

With the agree-to change, the FTA or DOT could withhold some of the transit agency's federal money until it cleans up its act and stops providing charter service that violates the law.

Finally, and most significantly, APTA agreed that FTA would engage in a new rulemaking covering charter service rules but that the process used would be what is called a "negotiated rulemaking."

A negotiated rulemaking differs significantly from the standard rulemaking process used by federal agencies. The typical rulemaking involves federal bureaucrats sitting down and writing the rule, and they may or may not get outside input for their rule.

Under a negotiated rulemaking, the rule will be developed by a committee composed of representatives from FTA, APTA, private bus groups and probably unions. The

composition of the rulemaking group is considered critical to achieving success, as is staying power. The rulemaking process is expected to take years to complete.

Here are key items the negotiated rulemaking will consider:

1. Are there potential limited conditions under which public transportation agencies can provide community-based charter services directly to local governments and private non-profit agencies that would not otherwise be served in a cost-effective manner by private operators?

2. How can the administration and enforcement of charter bus provisions be better communicated to the public, including use of internet technology?

3. How can the enforcement of violations of the charter bus regulations be improved?

4. How can the charter complaint and administrative appeals process be improved?

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An oily mess

One of the great political ironies of 2005 is that Congress has been working for months to develop legislation that addresses the nation's energy woes, but the bill being cobbled together will do nothing to bring down the price of diesel fuel at the pump.

The bill will do other things. For example, backers say it will lead to more long-term domestic energy production, including oil, gas, coal and nuclear.

It will cut oil consumption by increasing renewable and alternative fuels; it will improve electricity transmission reliability, and it will boost energy conservation and efficiency.

The bill does contain a couple of provisions of some significance to the over-the-road bus industry, though they're not going to help reduce the monthly fuel bill.

First, there is \$1 billion in grant money for truckers and bus operators to retrofit emission reduction technology to existing diesel engines.

The other addresses idling. It allows 15 minutes as the baseline for excessive idling time, which is what the motorcoach industry has generally been advocating for years.

But coach operators looking for relief from outrageous fuel prices won't find it in the energy bill.

Today, diesel fuel is roughly 63 cents a gallon higher than it was a year ago. An operator using 50,000 gallons annually is paying at least \$31,000 more for its fuel.

The strain on operators is obvious and it is significant.

And Congress rolls merrily along with no national policy to ameliorate the situation.

Drivers complaining? They have good reason.

The next time you're having a safety meeting and your drivers are grouching about how risky it is driving these days, don't be so quick to dismiss their complaints as idle chatter.

An assortment of new studies suggests there are increasing numbers of stupid auto drivers and tired truckers, plus way too many speeders on the nation's roadways.

One study by a national car insurer found that millions of Americans lack even basic knowledge of rules of the road and safe automobile operations.

The inaugural GMAC Insurance National Drivers Test examined the driving habits of about 5,000 licensed drivers between the ages of 16 and 65.

GMAC said its study found that about one in 10 drivers — nearly 20 million Americans — would fail a state drivers test.

The results indicate many Americans find standard driving practices vexing, including merging, yielding when making left turns, and road-sign interpretation. Many drivers also may not take such important topics as drinking and driving seriously enough, the study indicated.

The study also found that the most knowledgeable drivers were in Oregon, Washington state, Iowa, Idaho and Wyoming. The least knowledgeable were in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York and Washington, D.C.

HOV-lane confusion

High-occupancy-vehicle lanes may be leading to more crashes as people in adjoining standard lanes move into them and cause wrecks, *The Wall Street Journal* reports.

Citing a Texas Transportation

Institute study, the *Journal* said HOV lanes have resulted in as many as 56 percent more accidents in parts of Dallas-area freeways.

Without concrete barriers separating HOV from regular lanes, people sometimes move into the higher-speed lanes and cause accidents, the report said.

The Texas study said accident rates did not rise dramatically when there were concrete barriers separating the two types of lanes.

Tired truckers

A new Insurance Institute for Highway Safety survey indicates that interstate truck drivers are spending more time behind the wheel under the federal hours-of-service rule that went into effect last year.

The rule lengthens the mandatory rest period by two hours but lets truckers stay on the road an extra hour each day. A work-week restart provision increases allowable driving hours in a seven-day period from 60 to 77.

A quarter of the truck drivers surveyed said they drive more than the new daily limit of 11 hours. Eight of 10 drivers said they're taking advantage of the restart provision that allows them to drive 25 percent more in a week.

While the drivers said their sleep time has increased under the new rules, they reported slightly more instances than the previous year (when the old hours rule was in effect) of driving drowsy or nodding off at the wheel. When drivers were asked about dozing at the wheel at least once in the past month, the percentage increased from 13 percent (2003, under the old rule) to 15 percent (2004).

"The new rule was supposed to improve safety but our survey shows the opposite," said Anne McCartt, institute vice president for research. "Truckers are using the restart provision to squeeze even more driving hours into the week.

"Enforcement of work hours has long been a problem because written logbooks are easily falsified. The survey shows this hasn't changed. About a third of drivers said they sometimes or often omit hours worked from their logbooks," McCartt added.

Highway deaths involving large trucks rose for the second year in a row last year, increasing 3.7 percent and topping 5,000 for the first time since 2002, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

"The figures pretty much represent what's going on out on the highways," said American Trucking Associations spokesman Mike Russell. "They match the increase in vehicle miles traveled and the amount of truck tonnage being moved."

Steve Keppler, director of policy and programs for the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, said the increase was "a concern for us (because) that's the second year in a row that the absolute number of fatalities rose."

Phones blasted (again)

A new federal study says that driving while talking on a cell phone is a key cause of traffic accidents, and that using hands-free devices adds little in the way of safety benefits.

A team of researchers from the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute and the National High-

way Traffic Safety Administration evaluated 100 drivers over the course of a year and concluded that using cell phones led to many crashes and near-misses.

NHTSA researchers told the *Detroit News* that devices like head sets or voice-activated dialing led to longer dialing times than for those using hand-held phones, offsetting potential benefits of keeping both hands on the wheel.

One NHTSA official told the newspaper that phone use lessened driving performance and safety, whether holding a phone or using a hands-free device.

The study said there were nearly 700 safe-driving incidents involving wireless devices among the 100 people studied. The next major source of distraction was a car's passenger, which led to 400 safety concerns, followed by eating, which led to 100 incidents, the paper said.

Speed (still) kills

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that speed was a factor in about a third of all fatal crashes it examined in a special study of speed-related crash and death data from 1983 to 2002. About 1,000 people die each month in speed-related vehicle crashes, the NHTSA said.

New Jersey had the lowest proportion of crashes related to speeding, while South Carolina had the highest, the safety agency report said.

The proportion of speeding-related deaths, compared with total deaths, reached a high of 36.8 percent, or 16,947 deaths, in 1986. It fell to 29.9 percent, or 12,552 deaths, in 2000, but has grown since then, NHTSA said.

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Tuning up your PM saves big money

Equipment maintenance is one of the largest expense categories for most bus companies.

Often, maintenance cost is behind only payroll and fuel. Yet, it is an area of operations that continues to lag behind in terms of management sophistication.

There is a perception that maintenance is a common sense activity best left to the mechanic's seat-of-the-pants judgment. This notion may result from a lack of in-shop experience on the part of today's professional manager. Many managers are more comfortable with a sales report or financial statement than they are with a socket set.

The truth, however, is that modern maintenance management presents a mix of management challenges that requires more than a good mechanical aptitude to produce optimum results.

In addition to a degree of comfort with the complex technology of modern equipment, and a good mechanical aptitude, the modern maintenance manager must cope with managing inventory investment levels, recruiting and training scarce skilled staff, warranty track-

ing and recovery, detailed record keeping while reducing equipment down time, and preserving the company's capital investment. Despite this daunting mix of problems, maintenance management remains one of the best opportunities to reduce costs and improve financial performance.

There are four things required to manage maintenance effectively.

First, you must formulate a preventative maintenance plan at a level of detail that is workable and makes operational sense.

Second, you must insure that your shop works this plan accurately and in a timely fashion.

Third, you must be able to determine the precise cost of this maintenance plan and its impact on your resources.

Fourth, you must adjust the plan to improve its effectiveness.

The four requirements sound simple, but most maintenance activities do not have the system/information tools they need to make this management-cycle work.

Most managers have a plan (based on best guess), but they do

not have a management tool to allow them to be sure they are triggering work in the shop that precisely reflects their plan.

Few shops collect the right information to allow them to make informed decisions about the maintenance plan and subsequently make adjustments.

How long has your maintenance plan been in effect — 10 years, 20 years? When was the last time your shop did a maintenance plan review and adjusted the detail maintenance plan? What information did you use to back up your decisions?

It is my opinion that it is not possible to adequately manage a maintenance activity for more than 15 to 20 buses without a sophisticated "before-the-fact," automated maintenance management system like CEMP1 from Norse Systems.

A before-the-fact maintenance system is one that issues repair orders for the mechanics to start work on a predefined set of tasks before any work is performed. The maintenance system is the work trigger.

Work is triggered based on

equipment activity, collected daily, such as elapsed miles, days worked, or fuel consumed, and information about unscheduled failures or "discrepancies." The system then automatically manages the mix of scheduled and unscheduled work to avoid unnecessary repeat visits to the shop and optimize resource utilization. The objective is "precision execution of plan."

Once you have achieved precision execution of plan, any plan adjustments you make start to have an impact on your costs and performance. Using extensive cost and performance reporting tools available from your maintenance system, you can get almost immediate feedback on the effectiveness of any change you make to your plan.

Once the management loop is closed in this way you are "off to the races" and can start to generate savings out of your maintenance activity as if you were plucking cash from a money tree.

Let's take a hypothetical example to illustrate.

Suppose we have a 200-vehicle fleet. This fleet travels an average

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14 .

Sales team changes at Prevest Car

SAINTE-CLAIRE, Quebec — Prevest Car has announced changes to its motorcoach sales team, including the addition of Mark Stenz as regional sales manager for the southwest and plains states.

Other changes include Ward Hicken being named regional sales manager for the west coast, following Juan Lepe's transfer to the Prevest Bus Shells for Conversion Division.

Bill Leonard, regional sales manager for the southeast, will add Texas to his existing territory.

In his new job, Stenz will be responsible for new Prevest coach sales and customer support to operators in his territory. Most recently, Stenz was regional sales manager at Nova Bus. Stenz has more than 30 years of experience in the coach and bus industry. Stenz brings a wealth of industry knowledge to the company. He is well known and liked by coach operators and will be an excellent addition to the sales team. He can be reached at (920) 915-9232.



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Tire monitoring to go high tech

RICHMOND, British Columbia — SmarTire Systems, maker of the tire pressure monitoring systems slated for installation on MCI motorcoaches, has obtained backing to develop new wireless sensing and control applications.

Cornell Capital Partners, an investment fund, plans to provide SmarTire with \$11 million in cash, plus \$160 million as part of a standby equity distribution agreement, SmarTire said.

Earlier this year, SmarTire and Motor Coach Industries signed an agreement calling for MCI to purchase SmarTire's tire-pressure monitoring systems and offer them on its coaches.

MCI announced last month it plans to install the basic system as standard equipment on new coaches, and offer it for retrofit on existing buses.

MCI produces roughly 1,400 new coaches annually and services hundreds more at its seven regional fleet support centers.

The SmarTire for Buses system provides real-time tire pressure and temperature monitoring, and gives drivers a warning when there are tire-related problems.

Tire pressure monitoring systems for motorcoaches are an emerging trend, and something of an outgrowth of a new safety regulation for autos. Beginning with the 2008 model year, there will be

a light on the instrument panel of all new cars, light trucks and SUVs that warns drivers when a tire is underinflated.

The safety regulation, which was issued by the federal government earlier this year, had its roots in the massive Firestone SUV tire recall of 2000.

Automakers most likely will attach tiny sensors to each wheel that will signal if a tire falls 25 percent below the recommended inflation pressure.

If any tire is underinflated, the sensor will cause the warning light to glow.

The first cars, SUVs and pickups using the technology will begin showing up in September.

ARI unveils nitrogen inflation system

MANASSAS, Va. — ARI-Hetra has introduced a nitrogen tire inflation system, saying it is substantially safer than — and an economical alternative to — air.

The Nitrofill system replaces compressed air with noncorrosive, noncombustible and nonoxidizing nitrogen. Using nitrogen instead of air means a more stable tire

pressure, resulting in savings on fuel costs, said Robert S. Pennebrough, president of ARI-HETRA.

Additionally, because of nitrogen's noncorrosive nature, there is less rim corrosion, and tire aging is reduced so they last longer, meaning they can be re-treaded again and again.

Nitrogen inflation systems are

not new. The technology is used by commercial airlines, the Air Force, NASCAR and Formula 1 racers. The Nitrofill system features a generator and a nitrogen storage tank mounted on a platform.

For more information, go to www.ari-hetra.com or call (800) 562-3250.

Software vendors team to provide PM solutions

CHERRY VALLEY, N.Y. — Two important motorcoach industry software suppliers, Relational Bus Systems Inc. of Cherry Valley, and Ron Turley Associates of Phoenix, have joined forces to provide an intelligent integration of their systems.

Relational Bus Systems is North America's largest supplier of motorcoach tour and charter management software and Ron Turley Associates is a leading provider of vehicle maintenance systems.

"About two years ago we made the strategic decision that the vehicle maintenance module of the RBS charter management system would be the only piece that we would not convert to a Windows platform and graphical-user interface," explained RBS President Bill Harnett.

"We surveyed hundreds of our UMA- and IMG-member customers to find out what maintenance software they were using and what their experiences were," Harnett said. "The clear choice

was the Ron Turley Associates fleet management system.

"Unlike many vehicle maintenance systems, their experience with motorcoach, school bus and transit fleets meant you did not have to run your shop like a truck repair depot to use their software."

Among the points of integration between the RBS and RTA systems is the ability to send the RTA system "anticipated travel miles" for vehicles scheduled for the next 1, 3, 6 or 12 days to the RTA preventive-maintenance report.

This allows the shop to more intelligently schedule preventative maintenance. The RTA system can send actual cost of maintenance to the RBS post-departure reconciliation module to more accurately access charter profitability and contribution to non-direct costs.

For more information, contact Harnett at (800) 448-7001, or RTA at (800) 279-0549, or visit them at www.rbs2000.com or www.rtafleet.com on the web.

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Safety Gear

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

vice president and spokeswoman for National Interstate Insurance.

Lancer Insurance Co. is equally bullish on DriveCam, but more because the cameras pick up on poor drivers and driving habits, providing operators information they can use to correct drivers, require retraining, or even fire them.

"DriveCam helps by weeding out the causes of claims — bad drivers," said Randy O'Neill, senior vice president. "It gives instant feedback on how the vehicles are being driven and that vigilance translates into less claims and a more efficient driver force."

Lancer and National Interstate also are among the insurance companies that pay clients for having DriveCam on their motorcoaches.

The cameras, which are mini video recorders triggered by driver actions such as hard braking, accelerating or harsh cornering, capture everything the driver sees and hears seconds before, during and immediately after an accident or other road incident. At the same time, they record what the driver was doing just before the incident as well.

DriveCam maintains that the

equipment not only results in safer driving, but lowers investigative expenses and speeds up claim settlements, which leads to more predictable losses and more accurate underwriting.

But for most of the insurance companies, the real value is in having an actual picture of what happened in an accident and who was at fault. "It specifically addresses my need to see the picture to be able to defend a claim," said Silvestro.

O'Neill values the pictures, too, but cautions that they can backfire. "They help, but they can also hurt," he suggested. "They can make a moderate claim into a severe claim because there might be evidence the driver did something that was inappropriate."

National Interstate doesn't give rate reductions or cash for other safety equipment because rates are based on a review of a motorcoach business in its entirety — driver profiles, vehicle condition and age, maintenance practices, safety programs, operating territory and losses — and not a single factor, according to Silvestro.

She said if a carrier adds safety equipment and its losses actually decline over time, then the reduced loss experience would be a factor in

the company review. "And then it would be seen in their insurance rates," she adds.

Lancer, which operates in the same manner, doesn't allow rate reductions or payments simply for using safety equipment. Like most insurers, Lancer takes the position that motorcoach operators are *expected* to invest in equipment that strengthens their businesses and makes it safer, says O'Neill.

"I don't think you should get special credit for doing what a prudent operator should be doing to begin with," he adds. "We certainly are supportive of people doing those things, but I don't think that it is really going above and beyond."

Installing DriveCam, he emphasized, is going beyond the norm and results in a bonus for the people who use it.

He said Lancer is looking at other high-tech devices that could warrant similar payments, but no decisions have been made. Among them are devices that use a new, highly sophisticated black box technology. "We're talking with several vendors now and hope to decide soon," he added.

William Schoolman, president of Classic Coach in New York, said he can easily see why insurance

companies favor DriveCam because he has the equipment on all 110 of his coaches, midsize buses, shuttles, trolleys, vans, limousines and company cars. He says it has cut his losses in half. He didn't get any money for installing the equipment, though, because he is self-insured.

He said the cameras twice saved him substantial losses by taping serious accidents that showed the driver was not at fault in either case. "I can't imagine being in the fleet business without using DriveCam and I would never put a vehicle on the road without it," he added.

Some operators believe that other safety equipment should warrant lower premiums or payments the same as DriveCam.

Among them is Peter Pan Bus Lines, which recently purchased 16 MCI J model coaches with fire suppression equipment. "Logic tells you that if someone makes an investment that protects a unit against fire there should be some kind of consideration for that," says Bob Schwarz, executive vice president. "I know our financial people have that under the microscope right now."

He said the equipment added nearly \$10,000 to the cost of each of the new coaches.

Format switch underway for *The Exchange*

WASHINGTON — The United Motorcoach Association has announced that it intends to switch formats for its monthly member newsletter, *The Exchange*.

Beginning this month, the printed newsletter will also be available in an electronic format that is sent via the internet. Previously, the newsletter was mailed to members using the U.S. Postal Service.

"Over the next few months we plan to phase out the hard-copy of *The Exchange* entirely," said UMA President and CEO Victor Parra. "With the new e-mail format, members will find valuable Web site links to important information."

Members who would like to verify that UMA has their correct e-mail address are urged to call (800) 424-8262.

The first e-mailed newsletter will go out at the end of this month.

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Software aids maintenance efficiency, effectiveness

Vehicle maintenance is a two-edged sword.

On one hand, to ensure maximum uptime and remarket value, every vehicle in your fleet needs to receive proper, scheduled maintenance.

On the other hand, making sure this gets done — and gets done efficiently — can be complicated and labor intensive.

Unless your organization has the staff and the focus to implement its own maintenance management program, you could remain stuck in a costly balancing act. Fortunately, Distinctive Systems offers the ideal alternative — the Vehicle Maintenance System.

Distinctive Systems' VMS is a system specially designed for bus operators of all sizes. Developed using Microsoft Visual Studio, and based on the Microsoft SQL Server 2000 database engine, VMS is a client/server system powerful enough for even the largest operators. VMS is also ideal for use with any operator-maintained fleet of specialized vehicles, vans or cars.

VMS allows an unlimited number of activities to be assigned to a given vehicle make and model, with each consisting of any number of user definable preventative maintenance items and statutory safety inspections. Each vehicle has its own activity cycle that defines the order in which services and inspections are to be carried out with intervals in days, miles, hours or fixed dates as appropriate. Activities become scheduled activities when they are assigned to a date, which can be done either individually or automatically to any date in the future.

VMS includes a comprehensive defect recording system. A defect goes forward to

become an unscheduled activity which can either be assigned to its own date and time, or be attached to an existing scheduled activity.

VMS also includes a graphical bay planner for allocating scheduled and unscheduled activities into workshop, paint shop or cleaning bays. Activities can be moved to a different bay or time using drag and drop. The highly visual graphical presentation makes the optimization of resources especially easy.

VMS consists of a central vehicle maintenance module, plus optional modules for inventory, accounts payable, invoicing and accounts receivable. Users also can link VMS to Coach Manager CBS — Distinctive's SQL Server based charter booking system.

VMS features

- Unlimited user definable activities each with unlimited user definable maintenance items, statutory safety inspections, readings, costs, parts, bay facilities and skill requirements
- Faults, comments and work carried out can be recorded against each activity
- Activity cycle for each vehicle allows activities to be scheduled by distance, days, hours or fixed date
- Unscheduled activities can be assigned to their own dates or attached to scheduled activities
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People

Three former executives at subsidiaries of Greyhound Lines have joined Transportation Management Services of Falls Church, Va.

Phil Broderick, a former vice president at Greyhound Travel Services, has been named vice president of **Shore Link**, a new operating unit of TMS. Just prior to joining TMS, Broderick helped to build a company that provided cruise industry transportation solutions. Prior to that, he was responsible for customer service, operations and product development at Greyhound Travel Services.

Chuck Acker has joined TMS as vice president, bus operations for the Asian Games in Qatar. Acker will oversee development of on-site bus operations in Doha, Qatar. Previously, Acker was vice president of operations at **Hotard Coaches**, the New Orleans-based motorcoach company and a unit of Greyhound Travel Services.

Suzanne Crim also has joined TMS as national procurement director. Prior to joining TMS, Crim worked at Greyhound in various management capacities, including manager of **Greyhound Charters**, a \$20 million division of the company.

TMS is a leading transportation man-

agement company for complex events. Go to www.tms-llc.com for more information.

Laidlaw International has promoted two top executives to executive vice presidents and elevated two other senior managers. The two executive vice presidents are *Douglas A. Carty*, formerly senior vice president and chief financial officer, and *Beth Byster Corvino*, formerly senior vice president and general counsel.

Laidlaw Education Services named two senior vice presidents: *John Miller*, formerly vice president and chief financial officer, and *James Switzer*, formerly vice president, Canadian operations.

Jeffrey Runge is leaving his post as administrator of the **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration** to become the **Department of Homeland Security's** new chief medical officer.

Federal Highway Administrator Mary Peters left the agency at the end of last month after nearly four years as the nation's top highway official. FHWA Deputy Administrator *Rick Capka* is serving as acting administrator.

The **National Tour Association** has marked the 20th anniversary of *Hank Phillips* with the association. Phillips has served as president since 1998.

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Navistar to buy Workhorse, maker of cutaway bus chassis

WARRENVILLE, Ill. — International Truck and Engine Corp., a subsidiary of Navistar International Corp., is buying Workhorse Custom Chassis, a leading manufacturer of chassis for cutaway

buses, motor homes and commercial step-vans.

Terms of the cash deal were not disclosed.

The acquisition, which is expected to close before the end of

October, includes Uptime Parts, a parts distribution network that supplies commercial fleets and RV dealers.

Workhorse, which has administrative offices near Chicago and a

large manufacturing plant in Union City, Ind., produced more than 18,000 chassis last year. Combined sales at both Workhorse and Uptime Parts totaled roughly \$480 million last year.

Daniel C. Ustian, Navistar chairman, president and chief executive officer, said the acquisition will enable International to immediately become a major player in the growing Class A RV chassis market, and provide the opportunity to grow its diesel engine and parts sales.

“Workhorse and International’s product lines are highly complementary, which we believe will present many opportunities for operating synergies as well as allow us to offer a more complete line of products to existing customers,” said Ustian.

Workhorse was formed seven years ago when Andrew Taitz of Union City Body Co. purchased most of General Motors’ P chassis line (P-32 and P-42) and moved the operation to a new plant in Union City. Union City Body Co. is a builder of custom truck bodies that are typically used in delivery vehicles. United Parcel Service is its largest customer.

Workhorse and the parts unit employ more than 500 people.

PM tune-up

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

of 35,000 miles annually per vehicle. We have a PM cycle set at 3,500 miles for inspection and fluid change. We are a precision-execution shop, meaning we work very close to plan consistently.

It costs about \$200 per visit to the shop for this PM task, including parts, labor and lost-vehicle productivity. We adjust our PM schedule to 3,850 miles and track our unscheduled repairs carefully. Predictably there is no perceptible change in unscheduled repair costs.

Yet, we have saved \$40,000 per year in maintenance costs.

The key is in the “precision” of our execution. We cannot expect to achieve any savings if our execution of the existing plan completes some vehicles at 2,500 miles and others at 5,000-mile intervals scattered about, based on when it is convenient to bring them into the shop or when they happen to be broken.

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Preliminary Program Schedule

Wednesday, January 18, 2006

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

Thursday, January 19, 2006

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

Friday, January 20, 2006

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

Saturday, January 21, 2006

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

Sunday, January 22, 2006

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



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Comments? Questions? Call 800-424-8262 or e-mail us at info@uma.org

AUGUST 2005

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

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

24-27 International Motorcoach Group Strategic Alliance Meeting, Lake Geneva, WI. Info: (913) 906-0111 or www.imgcoach.com.

28-31 Motorcoach Association

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

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

SEPTEMBER 2005

7-9 Hawaii Transportation Association Annual Conference, Waikiki Beach Marriott Resort, Honolulu. Info: Go to www.htahawaii.org.

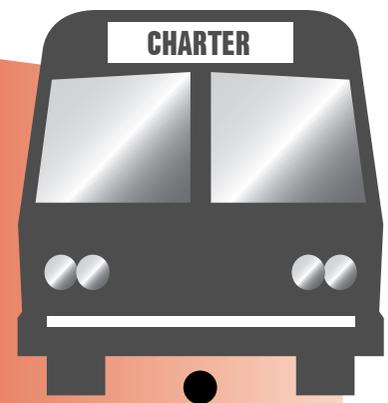
9-13 Virginia Motorcoach

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

24-29 Fall Workshop Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, Beau Rivage, Biloxi, MS 39530. Info: Go to www.cvsaa.org.

25-27 Louisiana Motorcoach Association Meeting & Marketplace, Isle of Capri Casino, Biloxi, Miss. Info: Go to www.lamotorcoachassociation.org.

25-28 Annual Meeting, American Public Transportation Association, Dallas Convention Center, Dallas. Info: Go to www.apta.com/expo.



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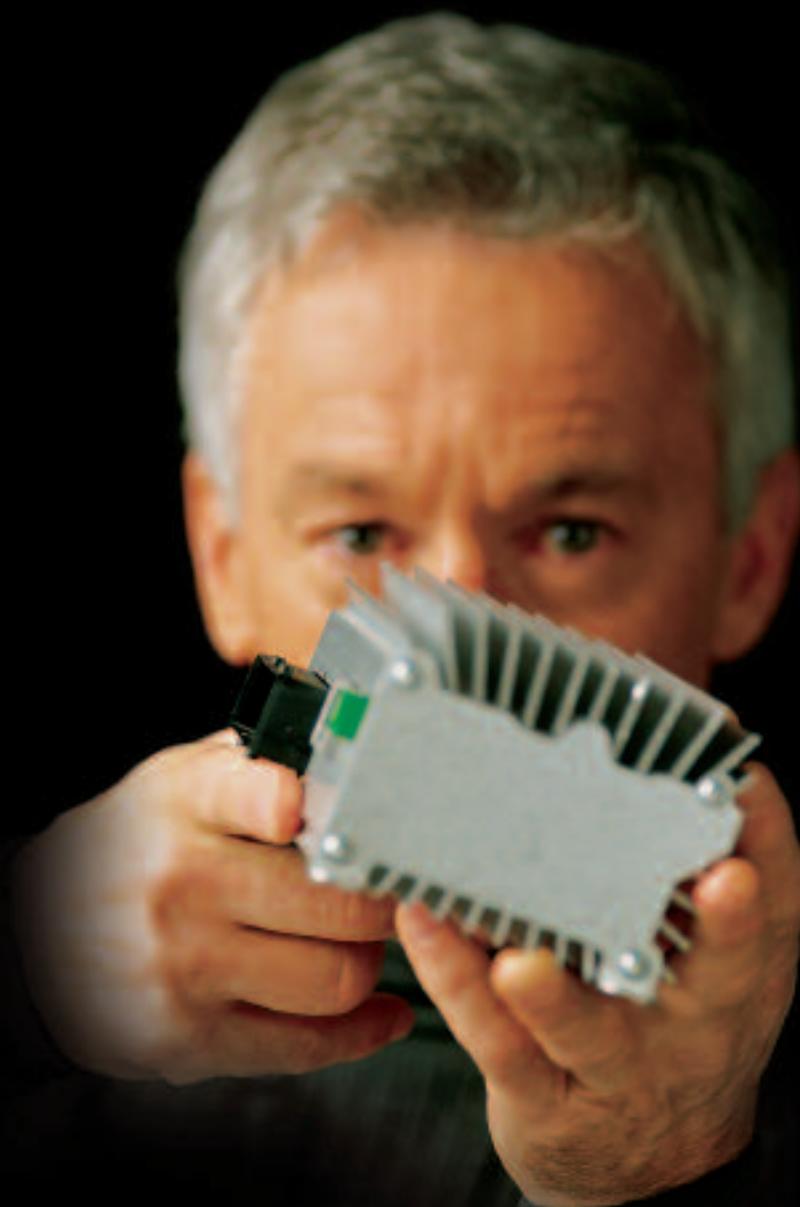
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