

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

Charter scam by Georgia transit raises FTA ire

ATLANTA — A regional administrator for the Federal Transit Administration has whacked a rural Georgia transit agency with a 2-by-4 because it was using federal dollars to operate and maintain a trolley bus whose only function was to provide illegal charters through a sham arrangement with a private van operator.

In a decision that only a lawyer could truly appreciate, Regional FTA Administrator Yvette Taylor and Regional Counsel Paul Jensen said the City of Rome (Ga.) Transit Department violated both the spirit and intent of federal charter regulations in its dealings with Shuttle Tran, which operates an airport van service out of Rome.

The FTA ruling stemmed from a complaint filed earlier this year by the United Motorcoach Association. UMA accused the Rome transit of providing illegal charters by engaging in a sham lease of its trolley bus to Shuttle Tran on at least 49 occasions last year.

The chartering activity was so commonplace and well known that area residents would call the Rome transit department and contract for the trolley bus like they were ordering a taxicab.

To cover its tracks, Rome Transit set up a sham lease arrangement with Shuttle Tran, which was paid a \$50 "commission" for supposedly providing the charters when, in fact, they were provided by Rome Transit drivers using the trolley bus.

And, rather than stop the charter operation, Rome transit "sub-contracted" all charter work through Shuttle Tran. The subcontracting was nothing more than a sham.

For Shuttle Tran, however, the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15 ►



Making a Splash. Coach USA's sightseeing operation in New York City now includes a water and land tour called New York Splash Tours. It uses a half-boat, half-bus vehicle to transport tourists around the city and along the Hudson River. See story on Page 3.

First classes ready for motorcoach academy

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Motorcoach operators and drivers don't have to leave the comfort of their offices or homes to attend classes to improve their business acumen.

The United Motorcoach Association's new Bus and Motorcoach Academy offers a lineup of continuing college education classes online that are aimed at helping operators improve their managerial skills and business knowledge, and help drivers improve their skills as professionals.

Developed by UMA in partner-

ship with the College of Southern Maryland, the academy is registering students for the first set of classes that begin Aug. 6. Each of the classes will repeat in September and again in November.

"I am confident the academy will provide a solid continuing education program for the bus industry and will address some of its most pressing needs," said Carmen W. Daecher, dean of the academy and chief executive of Daecher Consulting Group.

He said the industry's needs have broadened and deepened, and

Complete Coach Works buys coach divisions of Blue Bird; Blue Bird overhaul complete

FORT VALLEY, Ga. — In a deal with potentially significant long-term implications for several segments of the bus and motorcoach industry, Complete Coach Works of Riverside, Calif., is buying the motorcoach and recreational vehicle divisions of Blue Bird Corp.

The sale appears to be the final step in a complete restructuring of Blue Bird, which is returning to its foundation as strictly a producer of school and school activity buses from having been the nation's most diverse manufacturer of buses.

The streamlining of Blue Bird has been the handiwork of its new owner, Cerberus Capital Management, which bought Blue Bird last year after it went through a quick Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceeding early in the year.

When Cerberus bought Blue Bird, it was not only producing school buses but also two models of transit buses, commercial motorcoaches and commuter buses, plus motor homes and upscale recre-

ational vehicles from its base in Fort Valley.

First, Cerberus moved the transit bus lines to its North American Bus Industries subsidiary in Anniston, Ala., and now it's spinning off the motorcoach, motor home and recreational vehicle division to Complete Coach Works, the nation's largest supplier of remanufactured passenger transportation vehicles, repowers, emission upgrades and wheelchair-lift retrofits.

Blue Bird executives said the sale is part of their long-term strategy to focus the company exclusively on the school bus market. "This transaction represents an important step toward returning Blue Bird to its roots as the nation's premier school bus manufacturer," said Bob Shaughnessy, chief executive of Blue Bird.

Phase two of the Blue Bird overhaul involves selling what the company calls Blue Bird Coachworks, which produces and markets the 40- and 45-foot Express

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16 ►

the courses offered by the academy will help industry people — especially small operators — meet those needs.

The academy's initial five-class curriculum for owners, executives and managers includes Business and Marketing I and II, Financial Management, Safety and Compliance, and Human Resources.

Drivers will be able to study Driver Qualifications, Vehicle Maintenance, Safe Driving, Passenger Issues, and Security.

Unlike some on-line classes that can be taken at the student's

own pace, each of the academy classes will have to be completed in five weeks. The cost for each class is \$139 for UMA members and \$199 for nonmembers. Members can sign up for all five classes at a discounted rate of \$599.

For a look at what the academy has to offer and to sign up for classes, go the school Website at www.itc.csmd.edu/uma. There you will find a complete list and detailed descriptions of all of the classes offered by the academy and instructions on how to register.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11 ►

Go Green. Go Coach. Go MCI.

MOTOR COACH INDUSTRIES

Going further!

Fast-track J4500 coaches with EPA compliant clean-diesel engines are in stock now!

Call 1-866-MCICOACH or visit www.mcicoach.com.

NABI ADA TRANSIT BUSES FOR SALE

One-owner transit units now available for sale or lease*

70 1997 NABI Model 416-09, 40' – 102" wide two-door equipped transit service buses **IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE** featuring:

- Detroit Diesel low-emission Series 50
- Allison B400 5-speed
- Amerex Fire Suppression System
- 43 passenger with standees – mar-resistant seats
- Lift-U-Wheelchair Lift (Front Door)
- Front bumper mounted Sportsworks 2-position bicycle rack
- Luminator flip dot destination signs
- New AC systems T1 Thermo King – 2-year warranty
- 90 day limited engine and transmission warranty
- Like new condition – operated on the West Coast



* Used vehicle sold "as-is." See limited warranty details. To qualified customers, see Account Representative for terms and conditions.



Exclusive U.S.  Distributor

www.abc-companies.com

Phone John Oakman at ABC Companies, 1-800-222-2871, ext. 7104
or by email, joakman@abc-companies.com

FLEET FORWARD TRANSPORT SOLUTIONS

2-DOOR SHUTTLE ADA TRANSITS

One-owner transit units now available for sale or lease

16 2004 GCA 2038RE two-door equipped transit service buses
IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE featuring:

- Cummins 245 HP
- Allison B300
- DVD player AM/FM CD player with 4 speakers
- 6 monitors
- LED exterior lights
- Ricon instep lift package with 2 tie downs and ABA lighting
- Electromagnetic front LED destination sign
- Underfloor luggage compartment
- Carrier rooftop 310 system air conditioning



43 transit seats with padded inserts.
Standees available.



Exclusive U.S.  Distributor

www.abc-companies.com

Phone John Oakman at ABC Companies, 1-800-222-2871, ext. 7104
or by email, joakman@abc-companies.com

Used vehicle sold "as-is." No warranties expressed or implied.

FLEET FORWARD TRANSPORT SOLUTIONS

megabus.com developing plans to become much more mega

CHICAGO — megabus.com, the low-cost intercity bus service based here, is making moves to grow up and out, but it isn't yet ready to confirm any of its plans publicly.

However, industry sources and government agencies report that megabus.com plans to:

- Expand to the West Coast by offering service between San Diego and Los Angeles, and between Los Angeles and San Francisco via San Jose and/or Oakland.

- Introduce double-decker Van

Hool motorcoaches on some of its Midwestern routes that operate out of Chicago.

Also possible is megabus.com service to Las Vegas and Phoenix from Los Angeles.

And longer range plans may call for offering service in the northeastern U.S.

Last month, the California Public Utilities Commission gave its blessing for megabus.com to operate intercity service between Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco.

It is widely believed that Coach America will provide the service on a contract basis to megabus.com and its parent company, Coach USA.

Neither Coach USA nor Coach America have been willing to confirm such an arrangement is being negotiated, however.

Meanwhile, a number of Coach USA employees report that more than a dozen American-spec'd Van Hool TD-925 double-decker coaches have been ordered for use on megabus.com routes.

Training of drivers and maintenance personnel on the new coaches reportedly began last month. Height testing was said to have been completed last year.

ABC Companies, which distributes Van Hool coaches in North America, revealed at Motorcoach Expo in January it planned to start importing double-decker models but it did not identify a buyer.

Longer term, there is industry speculation that megabus.com may wade into the crowded cut-rate intercity market in the Northeast.

However, there will be no Northeast expansion until the non-compete agreement between Coach USA and Peter Pan Bus Lines expires.

The noncompete stems from Peter Pan's purchase of five Coach USA subsidiaries four years ago (See May 15, 2003 *Bus & Motorcoach News*).

Currently, megabus.com offers service to 13 Midwest cities from its hub in Chicago. Its fares are based on demand, with every bus having at least a few seats priced at \$1.

Bus operator in fatal crash gets 'unsatisfactory' rating

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Once again a motorcoach operator has been given an unsatisfactory rating on a federal compliance review conducted after the company had a fatal crash.

The latest operator to repeat the cycle is C&R Tours of Birmingham.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration gave the unsatisfactory rating after completing a compliance review, following the June 25 crash of a C&R coach on Interstate 65 north of Bowling Green, Ky.

The bus driver, Abraham Parker, 63, of Birmingham, and passenger Carrie Walton, 71, were killed.

and 64 others were injured. Parker apparently dozed off and ran off the road, striking an overpass support, police said. The crash occurred around 3 a.m. on a rural stretch of I-65 in southern Kentucky.

The nature of the violations uncovered by the compliance review weren't immediately available. A spokeswoman for the FMCSA said the agency normally doesn't release the violations until an enforcement case has been concluded.

Typically, carriers found in violation of federal safety rules are fined.

The spokeswoman said the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16 ►

N.Y. Splash Tours' AquaBus is city's first land/water trip

NEW YORK — Coach USA has expanded its New York sightseeing operation by launching New York Splash Tours (pun intended), a land-and-water tour that uses amphibious vehicles to carry tourists around the city and up and down the Hudson River.

Billed as a half-bus, half-boat, the 44-seat AquaBus provides what the company calls "New York City's first-ever land-and-water visitor experience," and the only "duck-like tour in the nation with an exciting multi-media theater component."

The Splash Tour route starts in Times Square, on the east side of Broadway between 47th and 48th Streets, and navigates the streets of Manhattan to the Hudson River.

At the edge of the Hudson, the bus enters the AquaBus Theater for a multi-media presentation on the sea voyages of explorer Henry Hudson.

Then the AquaBus "splashes"

into the Hudson River for "an explorer's eye view of the New York skyline."

After returning to land, the bus travels back to Times Square. Total trip time is about an hour. The buses leave every 45 minutes between 9 a.m. and 5:15 p.m. and will operate through December.

"New York Splash Tours is the best, most unique, most exciting way to experience (New York City) by land and sea — all in the same vehicle," says Tom Lewis, president of Gray Line New York Sightseeing.

New York Splash Tours is a partnership between Coach USA's New York Gray Line operation and NY Waterway, a company that provides leisure cruises and commuter ferry service.

Splash Tour fares are \$29 for adults and \$20 for children. Tickets are slightly cheaper online. The Website is www.NewYorkSplashTours.com.

Place it on your desk, put it on your bathroom mirror, stick it on your forehead...

Do whatever it takes, because this is one **TO-DO list** you want to keep track of. **Now** is the time to start saving **BIG** bucks on high quality JENSEN® bus entertainment systems!

TO-DO:

- Upgrade Bus Entertainment Systems to JENSEN!!

We need to get:

- JENSEN Widescreen LCD monitors
- Stereos w/ integrated PA
- PA/DVD Controllers
- DVD players
- Satellite TV

save with JENSEN

ASA Electronics brings you a **full family** of Bus Entertainment products under the JENSEN® brand, including Weatherband/SIRIUS/iPod® ready heavy duty stereos w/ integrated PAs, mics, and accessories; as well as PA/DVD controllers, 15" & 10" widescreen LCD monitors, 12V DVD players w/ mountable wired driver/hostess controls, KVH® mobile satellite TV systems, and upgrade kits that make it **easy** and **cost effective** to replace old factory CRT monitors with amazing, widescreen LCD monitors. We've got our hands full of new & unique products **specifically designed** for the coach bus industry.

So, stop putting off the task of outfitting or upgrading your buses. With JENSEN®, you'll get gratification two times over. You get the **pleasure** of giving your buses extreme entertainment makeovers and the **satisfaction** of knowing you didn't overpay for your bus electronics! Contact our JENSEN® distributors today for more information on our complete bus product lineup or to request a catalog.

JENSEN

DESIGNED TO MOVE [YOU]



JENSEN® Bus Entertainment Systems available through our Authorized Bus Distributors.

Eastern
Kingston Mobile
866.733.2820

Western
LTM Electronics
800.447.6825

National Installer
Ward Electronics
800.695.1670

ASA electronics
THE MOBILE ELECTRONICS COMPANY SINCE 1971

ENHANCE YOUR COACH PROGRAMMING WITH MOVIES!



Blow out your competition by creating an entertainment edge! This permit allows you to show licensed Hollywood motion pictures on your coaches legally. With a Public Performance License from Motorcoach Movies, your company can show exciting family and blockbuster films from the following Hollywood studios:

WALT DISNEY, TOUCHSTONE, HOLLYWOOD PICTURES, NBC UNIVERSAL, COLUMBIA, PARAMOUNT, TRISTAR, WARNER BROS., MGM, UNITED ARTISTS, MIRAMAX, PARAMOUNT VANTAGE, FOCUS FEATURES, LIONS GATE FILMS, DREAMWORKS, NEW LINE CINEMA

Call 1-888-416-2572

to obtain your Public Performance License today!



A Division of Swank Motion Pictures, Inc. Tim Swank, Chairman

WWW.MOTORCOACHMOVIES.COM

Shuttle Bus Leasing

"Your Solution For Shuttling & Fixed Route Contracting"

Leases Terms Available From 3 Months to 2 Years

High Quality, Transit Shuttle Buses

Over 1000 Buses In Inventory

22' To 60' Models Available



Parking Lot Shuttles ~ Seasonal Coverage
Employee Shutting ~ Peak Demand Coverage



Top Quality Transit Buses Also
Available for Sale

800-287-7253

1863 Service Court, Riverside, CA 92507
www.ShuttleBusLeasing.com



DRIVING YOUR BUSINESS FORWARD

- Reduce Costs
- Maximize Revenues
- Make Solid Management Decisions

Reservations • Scheduling • Dispatch • AVL • GPS • Mapping • MDC • IFTA Reports • Route Planning • Availability at a Glance and more!

www.eforwardsolutions.com
CALL (416) 273 - 7458 TODAY
TOLL FREE (800) 216 - 0978

Take Control of Your Costs and Odors!

Ultra PowrPak XL

Better than ever. Controls odors all week long.



*Deep blue non-staining dye
and long-lasting fragrance!*

chempace
corporation "the solution people"

Call for Free Samples!
1-800-423-5350

339 Arco Drive • P.O. Box 3484 • Toledo, OH 43607
419-535-0101 • Fax 419-535-0531 • www.chempace.com

THE DOCKET

N.Y. lawmakers halt Bloomberg congestion plan

ALBANY, N.Y. — State lawmakers in New York have all but buried New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's plan to reduce traffic and pollution by charging a fee for commercial vehicles and autos to drive in parts of Manhattan.

The state Senate convened in special session last month without taking action on the plan after it became clear there was not enough support for its passage.

The Bloomberg plan proposed fees on trucks, cars and presumably buses that traveled in central Manhattan below 86th Street. The goal was to reduce congestion and pollution. A similar scheme is used in London. (See July 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver proposed sending the plan to a commission to study alternative ways to reduce congestion. Silver had been quoted in previous news reports at being opposed to the idea.

Bloomberg called the legislature's failure to act a "terrible setback" for the city. He reportedly will press ahead with other aspects of the plan, including replacing traditional yellow taxicabs with hybrid models by 2012.

July was the deadline for the city to receive as much as \$500 million in federal transportation aid that could have been tied to the measure's passage. But lawmakers said there were too many unanswered questions about the plan.

ATA reorganizes 'Watch' program

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The American Truck Associations has revamped management of the Highway Watch program.

The program, designed to combat terrorism and other criminal activity, is now under the leadership of Dave Barefoot, a senior vice president and the association's chief financial officer.

Prasad Sharma, ATA's assistant general counsel, has been promoted to serve as Highway Watch's executive director and general counsel. Bill Jacobs, who formerly ran Highway Watch, has resigned.

Hearing focuses on FMCSA safety oversight

WASHINGTON — The administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration says his agency has improved its oversight and compliance reviews of high-risk truck and bus companies, but more work remains to be done.

"We have significantly increased our compliance reviews since 2004," FMCSA Administrator John Hill told members of the House Transportation and Infra-

structure Committee. States deserve much of the credit, said Hill, who singled out California and Minnesota in particular.

The Motor Carrier Safety Improvement Act of 1999, which created the FMCSA, required the agency to reduce fatalities involving commercial motor vehicles by 50 percent by 2009, and to submit a plan to Congress to quantify the agency's progress.

In 1999, 5,365 individuals were killed in large commercial vehicle crashes, compared to 5,212 in 2005, a reduction of less than 3 percent.

Calvin Scovell, inspector general for the U.S. Department of Transportation, told the committee that while the FMCSA has made important progress, that progress appears to have "flatlined," and further reductions in the fatality

rate will be difficult to achieve.

One specific area Hill identified as needing improvement is the verification of driver records when a compliance review is conducted. In the future, Hill said, the FMCSA will run checks on all drivers employed by companies with 20 drivers or less.

U.S. Rep. Peter A. DeFazio, D-Ore., asked why FMCSA wouldn't

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 ▶

Audit: SafeStat is still not ready for public

WASHINGTON — Auditors for the U.S. Department of Transportation say the Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration SafeStat system still is not ready for prime time.

In fact, say the auditors, before the public can view SafeStat scores the FMCSA needs to make additional improvements.

SafeStat, which is officially known as the Motor Carrier Safety Status Measurement System and is used by the FMCSA to identify high-risk truck and bus operators, was the subject of an extensive review by the USDOT Office of Inspector General.

Three years ago, the FMCSA removed from its public Websites both the overall SafeStat scores and all SafeStat accident data, calling the move temporary and saying it was necessary to make sure the accident data was accurate, complete and timely.

U.S. Rep. Thomas Petri, R-Wis., former chairman of the House Highways, Transit and Pipelines Subcommittee, requested the review by the USDOT Inspector General.

Although the FMCSA has improved SafeStat, problems still exist with states reporting crash data to the agency, the report said.

While states are reporting more truck and bus crashes, anomalies call into question the completeness of the non-fatal crash reporting, the report said.

"We recommended that FMCSA implement a new, more reliable estimate that would allow evaluation of non-fatal crash reporting, both nationally and state by state, before the department makes all SafeStat scores available to the public," the report said.

The FMCSA is working on a new, more accurate national estimate of how many non-fatal crash reports are absent from its database and how many are missing

from each state, with a target date of October. The OIG recommended SafeStat scores not be available to the public until this step is complete.

In June, the Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress, reported SafeStat is better than random selection at identifying high-risk carriers but said a statistical approach would be better. (See July 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Late-reported crash data, cited as a potential statistical problem by the USDOT, in fact has little effect on SafeStat's usefulness, the GAO reported.

FMCSA pondering revising driver health rules

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration is considering stricter medical guidelines for professional truck and bus drivers, according to health publications and Websites.

Any new regulations likely would include diabetes-related and high-blood pressure guidelines, according to the publications.

The talk of revised regulations comes as the Transportation Research Board, an arm of the National Academy of Sciences,

nears completion of a new report on the health of commercial vehicle drivers.

The report is believed to focus primarily on truck drivers, which constitute one of the unhealthiest groups of workers in the American economy. Obesity among truckers is rampant and so are obesity-related health problems like heart disease and Type 2 diabetes. There's also widespread sleep apnea and smoking among long-haul truckers.

However, any new medical

guidelines likely would be aimed at all commercial vehicle drivers and not just truckers. And the new TRB report may influence the scope of revamped regulations, which are under study by the FMCSA.

Currently, holders of CDLs are tested every two years to maintain their licenses. Waivers can be granted, but generally commercial drivers can't be licensed if they have severe high blood pressure or severe heart conditions.

Other aspects of drivers' health, like weight and smoking,

aren't regulated.

One researcher who helped compile the latest research said any new regulations won't attempt to regulate behavior but rather be designed to educate people to the linkage between being a healthy person and a safe driver.

Truck and bus companies also will be urged to do more to foster better health among their employees, whether it's to reduce healthcare costs or hang onto employees in an industry where shortages are growing.

D.C. court approves tax for unused hotel rooms

WASHINGTON — A District of Columbia Court of Appeals decision regarding hotel attrition fees could have significant implications for the travel industry if it is applied elsewhere.

The court, the highest judicial body in the District of Columbia, has held that the district's sales tax

applies to a hotel's attrition fee, which is charged to a group when it fails to fill a reserved room block.

Although the amount of such a fee is typically open to some negotiation, it is commonly based on the difference between the rates of the rooms the group actually

uses and those it had reserved.

In the court case, the hotel argued that no tax applied to the fee since it did not represent the sale of rooms, only a penalty.

The district contended that the fee represented the right of the reserving party to use the rooms, and thus represented the sale of

lodgings, a taxable event.

The appeals court judges agreed with the district, since the statute did not require a right actually to be exercised for its sale to be taxed.

The decision could impact groups that hold large meetings at hotels.

Major funding shortfall worries highway groups

WASHINGTON — A coalition of national highway and transportation groups is calling for immediate action by Congress and the Bush Administration to address the looming multibillion dollar shortfall in the federal Highway Trust Fund.

Their call follows new estimates released by the Office of Management and Budget, showing a much larger shortfall than had been forecast by the Bush Administration less than six months ago.

When the Bush budget for fiscal 2009 was released in February, it forecast a \$700 million Highway Trust Fund shortfall for the year. In its mid-session budget review released last month, the forecasted shortfall was increased to more than \$4 billion.

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, which represents the state transportation departments, and others immediately called for action to address the issue.

AASHTO Executive Director John Horsley said unless action is taken there could be substantial cuts in the federal-aid highway program financed in each state through the Highway Trust Fund.

"The impact of these shortfalls will be dramatic," said Horsley. "If this massive deficit were to be offset by obligation limitation reductions, it would require

reducing the distribution of federal funding to the states by as much as \$16.5 billion in fiscal 2009.

"It takes four dollars in obligation reductions to save one dollar in spending," according to Horsley, who added that such a reduction would mean a cut in the federal-aid highway program from a planned obligation level of \$43.2 billion to \$26.7 billion.

"Clearly, states cannot meet transportation demands in the face of such dramatic cuts," said Horsley. "We must work with the Congress to identify ways to fill these funding gaps."

The mid-session review also increased the forecast shortfall to \$9 billion in 2010 and to \$15 billion in 2011.

Meanwhile, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials has launched a Website that will present a multi-decade vision for U.S. ground transportation.

The Website, www.transportationvision.org, contains research, a set of reports created by AASHTO, and links to affiliated groups.

Working groups convened by AASHTO have produced a series of recommendations on specific areas, transit and intercity passenger bus, and how these systems can better meet needs for the future, and what the national highway system of the future will require to meet national needs.

Transit agencies seek charter firms

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

Davis, Calif. Deadline: July 31, 2007. Write to: Anthony Pal-

mere, Assistant General Manager, Unitrans, One Shields Ave., Davis, CA 95616. Phone: (530) 754-5814.

Creek, Kay, Osage and Pawnee counties, Okla. Deadline: Aug. 3, 2007. Write to: Laura Corff, United Community Action Program/Cimarron Public Transit, 501 Sixth St., Pawnee, OK 74058. Phone: (580) 718-0456.

Chillicothe, Ohio. Deadline:

FMCSA oversight

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

include companies with more than 20 drivers.

It's a matter of manpower, Hill replied, and it wouldn't be practical to check all of the drivers at a huge fleet. Hill said 90 percent of carriers have 10 vehicles or less.

Following the hearing, one motorcoach industry safety expert said that having the FMCSA run driving history records, known as MVRs, "could get very interesting."

"The problem for operators is they do not really have any true way to know a driver's previous

accident history. Some of that activity shows up on the MVR (motor vehicle report), particularly if there was a violation associated with it, but little if any detail.

"Until a few years ago, agents provided MVRs to the operators — free of charge — as a service, and they had to order them anyhow for the insurers.

"Privacy laws preempted that and unfortunately, and all too often, there is no MVR in the driver qualification file.

"The bar is simply too low," said the coach industry source.

Will the FMCSA be able to make good on Hill's promise of verifying driver records. "I person-

Pieces moving into place for start of UCRA

WASHINGTON — The infrastructure needed to set up the new Unified Carrier Registration System is finally beginning to take shape and a late-summer or early-fall start-up now seems likely.

The UCRA board of directors, which is responsible for creating the system that is replacing the old Single State Registration System, met late last month in Chicago and has two meetings this month that should about finalize the process.

One board member said the accelerated pace of meetings signals the program is nearing its implementation for 2007, it's first year. Some are predicting the program will be up and going by Sept. 1.

Additionally, the federal rule-making setting the Unified Carrier Registration Agreement fees for this year is due to be completed soon, and the UCRA board will be circulating a notice to commercial bus and truck operators, along with the official procedures and forms the participating states will use to administer the program.

At its meeting in late June, the UCRA board learned that a state member of the new system has offered to develop and host the national on-line system that motor carriers will use to register and pay their UCRA fees. If that works out, it will fill the last major gap in the arrangements for the new program.

Pennsylvania wants tolls on I-80, hike on turnpike

HARRISBURG, Pa. — The oft-times vitriolic debate in Pennsylvania during the past year over financing the state highway program saw some resolution last month.

Gov. Edward G. Rendell signed a bill that provides nearly \$1 billion in average annual funding for transportation infrastructure and public transit.

At the same time, Rendell proposed putting tolls on Interstate 80, the principal East-West highway across north central Pennsylvania, connecting New Jersey and Ohio, and raising tolls on the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

Rendell said Pennsylvania was in need of major new income sources to pay for the repair of the state's deteriorating highways and to support public transportation, especially in its two largest cities, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

I-80 carries the majority of commercial vehicle traffic across Pennsylvania and is a much newer highway than the Pa. Turnpike, which was the first major toll highway in the U.S.

Being toll-free to date, many operators have preferred I-80 to the Pennsylvania Turnpike or the New York State Thruway, which is 100 miles to the north and is also a toll road.

Rendell favors tolls, rather than gasoline and diesel fuel tax increases because fuel taxes in Pennsylvania already are higher than in most neighboring states.

If the I-80 tolls get federal approval it likely will take upwards of a year to implement them.

It has not been announced if the road would have toll barriers at prescribed intervals (as on I-95 in Maryland and Delaware) or if a toll ticket system would be used as on most toll roads such as the Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana turnpikes and N.Y. Thruway.

Meanwhile, the new law signed

True safety evaluations depend not just on crash data but on driver and carrier data, Deborah Hersman, a member of the National Transportation Safety Board, told the committee.

"We made this recommendation in 1999," Hersman said. "It would be ambitious (for FMCSA) to get it done by 2010."

Hill said CSA 2010 will include both drivers and carriers.

U.S. Rep. Todd Platts, R-Pa., asked Hill whether any progress has been made in improving the commercial driver licensing process.

Plans are being drawn to merge the CDL and medical certifications, Hill said, and a notice of pro-

by Rendell will make an average of \$532 million available annually for the next 10 years to fund bridge and road repairs and \$414 million available to support the state's 73 public transit systems.

Initially, the money to fund the law will rely on borrowing against future toll revenues on the Pennsylvania Turnpike and I-80.

More than \$13 billion in borrowing by the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission over about a dozen years would be necessary to meet the funding levels until money comes in from a 25 percent Pennsylvania Turnpike toll increase in 2009 and the proposed I-80 tolls. Turnpike tolls would rise by 3 percent a year after 2009.

"The bridge and road crisis has been building for decades," said Rendell. "Over the past four years, we have made record, annual state investments for the maintenance and construction of highways and bridges — \$2.37 billion in 2006-07 compared to \$1.78 billion in 2003-04 — but we could not keep up with our aging infrastructure, rising construction costs and dwindling federal resources."

"Despite our record investments in highways and bridges in the past four years, Pennsylvania has nearly 6,000 structurally deficient bridges — the highest number of any state — and more than 8,500 miles of roads that are in need of repair."

The new law replaces a patch-work transit funding system with the new Public Transportation Trust Fund, which will draw resources from sales and other taxes, lottery proceeds and money from the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission.

The Port Authority of Allegheny County, which operates the public transit system in Pittsburgh, will receive a 43 percent increase in state operating assistance this year.

posed rulemaking on the training of entry-level drivers is pending. Hill hopes the notice will be issued later this year. "The industry is very interested in this issue," he said.

U.S. Rep. Grace Napolitano, D-Calif., asked Inspector General Scovell, "What is the major (safety) issue? How can we address this issue?"

Scovell's response: "We believe a prime focus should be on the driver."

"Would tamper-proof safety logging help?" Napolitano asked.

"That would help us, as far as documenting hours of service and false logbook entries," Scovell said.

Your passengers aren't the only ones who deserve a little rest and relaxation.



We build reliability into each of our motor coach models, so you can spend more time pampering your passengers, not babying your buses. From the #1 best-selling J4500 to our flagship E4500, and from our ultra-luxurious LX coaches to our D4505 and D4005 workhorses, you'll find the technology you need, the features you want, and the widest array of clean-diesel powertrain options in the industry. Plus, you'll find MCI PRO Support. From parts and service to financing and training, PRO Support is your one-stop business-building resource. When it comes to going further, we're leading the way.



MCI PRO SUPPORT

At MCI, excellence is second nature.

Call 1-866-MCICOACH or go to www.mcicoach.com



MOTOR COACH
INDUSTRIES

Going further!

Remembering... Gerald Hausman

Comments made in the editorial obituary for Gerald Hausman require clarification. (See July 1 issue.)

Being one of those industry veterans hired by Mr. Hausman more than 30 years ago, I feel it necessary to set the record straight regarding the description of him as "not graduating from charm school." Mr. Hausman, as I referred to him for the 30 years I knew him, was an old-fashioned, traditional businessman. His word was his bond and the customers he built his business and success upon were often his lifelong friends and as close as family.

Mr. Hausman was a World War II veteran and a product of the Depression. He was a self-made man with high expectations of the people he surrounded himself with, whether you were family, employee or friend. He often shared the adages he lived by which included, "Surround yourself with people smarter than you are and pay them what they are worth if you want to succeed." "Be close to your friends but closer to your enemies." "Your first loss is your best loss." And, "sometimes you have to smile when things don't go your way and win another day."

He was tough but generous. Also, stubborn, but right most of the time. Dedicated to this industry and he never stopped until the day he passed away, caring about the growth and future of the operators who chose owning and operating motorcoaches for their life's work.

In the end, he got a bit less patient, less able to participate in the events and trade shows he enjoyed, and did not reach out as often to make new acquaintances. But this is not the way he should be remembered. He should be remembered as the man who created the used bus and parts network still used today and who recognized the opportunities for the North American motorcoach business by creating alliances and partnerships that created the framework for Motor Coach Industries today.

Let's remember him respectfully and properly as a one-of-a-kind man who created stability and a legacy for the industry we all share today.

—Patricia Ziska

Vice President and
Chief Customer Officer, MCI

Restoring the prestige of motorcoach drivers

Dave Millhouser is to be praised for his astute take on what is at the root of the driver shortage.

Mr. Millhouser made excellent points and he obviously has his finger on the pulse of the situation.

I also enjoyed reading his down to earth and humorous remarks about the "driver stories" we have all heard. I spent more than 20 years in sales and management for Greyhound Lines and Arrow Stage Lines in Phoenix, and I can assure you motorcoach operators have an equal number of amusing stories about those of us "in suits."

At the same time, I — and no doubt others — cringed when reading the remarks made by Michael Kraft.

Although certainly entitled to his opinions, statements like the ones Mr. Kraft made are not only damaging to the goal of raising the bar, they are like throwing a stick of dynamite into the efforts being made to change this mind set. To compare a motorcoach operator to an orangutan is shameful.

Although *Bus & Motorcoach News* may not typically be read by drivers, I guarantee you if it got into one person's hands, it has been conveyed to hundreds.

It is not my intention to personally attack Mr. Kraft, as you can hear this sentiment echoed within dispatch offices and management meetings across the board; sad to say, but he is not alone.

We need to change this attitude and return the position of motorcoach operator to one that commands respect.

As I mentioned, I started my career at Greyhound in 1983, booking military charters. At that time, drivers were very well paid, well respected and looked upon on a similar level as airline pilots.

Who's to blame?

We can blame deregulation, competition and myriad other things, but regrettably, I feel that we are the ones who let them down.

When I first went to work for Arrow Stage Lines in 1990, the tour drivers were "the kings." These guys used to come through Phoenix with big smiles and loads of cash. They spent hours of their own time at night in hotel parking lots polishing the rims, sweeping floors and making sure every spot was off of the windows so the coach would shine for the passengers the next morning.

So what happened?

The price of coaches about doubled, while the daily rate being charged remained flat due to cut-throat competitors and tour operators willing to switch motorcoach companies for a few bucks.

The insurance carriers changed from being a competitive market to maybe four companies willing to insure motorcoach companies; fuel became a major factor; medical insurance increased, workers comp...you name it. All of the costs skyrocketed, yet the revenues remained flat.

So, who took the hit? All of us. But how did it impact our motorcoach operators?

Feeling the pain

Wholesale tour operators reduced the amount they paid the tour guides which resulted in many of the guides being "less than equitable" in sharing tips.

Motorcoach operators who used to go out of their way to do Las Vegas night tours and take passengers to helicopter rides got left out as the tour companies began collecting the money before the tours began.

Motorcoach operators stood by

at airport arrivals and departures as they saw tour guides handing skycaps wads of cash, yet the driver is expected to load and unload the bags numerous times during a tour.

It's a difficult balance for the sales team in the office. If you raise the rate or suggest you include a tip for your driver, you run the risk of losing the revenue to the guy down the street, and your coach will sit.

I also need to mention that my husband was a tour driver for Arrow for six years and it used to break my heart to see him leave not knowing if he would be home in 10 days or if he would be hooked up to other tours and gone for months.

Let's face it, the lifestyle of a motorcoach operator stinks. The rewards used to help balance the sacrifices, but the rewards are no longer there.

The very least we can do is support them, encourage them, train them and pray for their safe return.

Look in the mirror

If we in the industry don't foster the image that our drivers deserve, how can we expect to attract the caliber of motorcoach operators that we require and our customers deserve?

It begins with us, folks.

Sure, drivers goof up. So do we, only our mistakes are not quite so visible. Ralph Schifano, a well known tour driver who was later promoted to the position of safety director of Arrow, lived by the rule that he would hire the personality and train the driver, and it worked.

I don't have the answer to solve the problem, but I do know that we can make it better by treating them with the dignity they deserve. Send them out the door in a good

mood. After all they will probably be the only face in your company that is seen by the customer.

It doesn't take much to set aside a few minutes to chat with the motorcoach operators, get to know about their families, show genuine interest in what is going on in their lives.

Try having summer photo contests, chili cook-offs, picnics, bus rodeos, holiday parties and the like. It all goes into a mix of showing the motorcoach operators that they are valued and an integral part of your operation.

We surely couldn't do it without them.

Hopeful signs

I see a positive movement in the last two years to raise the daily rates. Fuel surcharges are no longer being challenged and coach companies are at last sticking to their guns instead of caving in.

Driver pay is increasing, insurance and benefits are being offered by smaller companies where they were not available before. Things are getting better, but it will take time.

The year 2008 is projected to be a very strong one for our industry, and we must be prepared. So, why not start now? Support your driving staff, give them encouragement and extra training if that is what is needed.

Try to catch them doing something right — it's not that hard to do.

I believe if we start by internally changing our own attitudes, we will attract the kind of people we need to continue to promote and improve the image of our industry.

—Debby Marcum, CTP

How to contact us:

To submit or report news, Letters to the Editor, articles, news releases:

E-mail: bsankey@busandmotorcoachnews.com

Fax: (866) 930-8426

Mail: 4930 W. Glendale Ave., Suite 6 Glendale, AZ 85301

Call: (405) 601-1639

To subscribe or inquire about your subscription:

Call: (623) 930-8421

E-mail: ebalm@busandmotorcoachnews.com

Fax: (866) 930-8426

Mail: 4930 W. Glendale Ave., Suite 6 Glendale, AZ 85301

To report corrections:

Call: (405) 601-1639

E-mail: bsankey@busandmotorcoachnews.com

To advertise or to mail advertising-related materials:

Call: Johnny Steger
(623) 930-8422 or (602) 980-0840

E-mail: jsteiger@busandmotorcoachnews.com

Mail: 4930 W. Glendale Ave., Suite 6 Glendale, AZ 85301

To contact the United Motorcoach Association:

Call: (800) 424-8262

Online: www.uma.org

To send advertisements or photographs via the Internet:

E-mail: BMNews@jezac.com

©2007 by the United Motorcoach Association.
Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited.

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED MOTORCOACH ASSOCIATION

Staff

Editor & Publisher
Victor Parra

Sales Director
Johnny Steger

Industry Editor
Ken Presley

Editorial Assistant
Amy Stalknecht

Accountant
Ted Williford

Senior Editor
Bruce Sankey

Associate Editor
Ellen Balm

Editorial Assistant
Mark Gedris

Art Director
Mary E. McCarty

William Allen
Sierra Trailways
Sacramento, Calif.

Larry Benjamin
Northfield Lines
Northfield, Minn.

Dave Bolen
New World Tours
Bristol, Va.

Steve Brown
Brown Coach
Amsterdam, N.Y.

Bob Foley
ABC Companies
Faribault, Minn.

Gladys Gillis
Starline Transportation
Seattle

Rick Hillard
Cedar Valley World Travel
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Robert Hume
Travel Mates Trailways
Harrisonburg, Va.

Daryl G. Johnson
J & J Charters
Crosby, Texas

Dale Krapf
Krapf Coaches
West Chester, Pa.

Godfrey Lebron
Paradise Trailways
Hicksville, N.Y.

Joan Libby
Cavalier Coach
Boston, Mass.

Marcia Milton
First Priority Trailways
District Heights, Md.

Michael Neustadt
Coach Tours
Brookfield, Conn.

Jeff Polzien
Red Carpet Tours
Oklahoma City

Tom Ready
Ready Bus Lines
LaCrescent, Minn.

Brian Scott
Escot Bus Lines
Largo, Fla.

Michelle Silvestro
National Interstate Insurance Co.
Richfield, Ohio

T. Ralph Young
Young Transportation
Ashville, N.C.

ISSUE NO. 105

Playing it smart when the insurance market is 'soft'

By Peter R. Cohen

Motorcoach operators have heard a lot recently about today's "soft" market for liability insurance. But what do the expressions "hard" and "soft" market really mean?

In a hard market, insurance coverage is more difficult to place; certain coverages might have lower limits, higher deductibles or might not be available at all, and premiums are quite high.

In a soft market, coverage is more readily available, underwriters might be more amenable to negotiating, and premiums are either stable or falling.

There are a variety of factors that influence the status of the insurance market at any point in time. These factors include economic downturns, catastrophic events, insurance industry claim reserves, and old-fashioned supply and demand.

Supply is tied to the amount of policyholders' surplus (the amount over and above liabilities available for an insurer to meet future obligations) in the industry. Demand, on the other hand, is the appetite or willingness of the motorcoach

operator to transfer risk in a multitude of different ways.

The above factors account — in large part — for the cyclical nature of the insurance industry.

There are a number of other factors that motorcoach operators should consider and be aware of as they make their insurance choices.

The issues that determine insurance pricing are really the only consistent part of these up-and-down cycles. Those factors include — first and foremost — claims activity and history, geographic location, area and scope of operations, hiring, training and maintenance protocols, as well as day-to-day management/ownership involvement and commitment.

It's essential to never lose sight of the fact that market cycles, hard

and soft, never last.

Many insurance buyers lower their own standards during a soft market because insurance costs are generally lower, coverage is more readily available and their emphasis on safety seems to be of less significance. This is almost never a formula to assure long-term viability.

I recently visited a motorcoach operator who, during a soft market cycle, had purchased his coverage from a new "player" in the industry. He said the price was the overriding motivational factor in his ultimate decision.

Simply put, this new "player" offered premiums markedly lower than anything else he found. He went on to tell me that during that particular policy year, one of his coaches had been involved in a

serious incident.

The insurance carrier he had chosen had subsequently been declared insolvent and that put the coach operator in the unenviable position of looking to his home state guarantee fund (a "fund" established to protect the buying public in the event their insurance carrier has no funds to fulfill their claim obligations) to step in.

Unfortunately, the guarantee fund could not defend him or indemnify any injured parties either because previous insolvencies had rendered the fund essentially bankrupt. It is worth noting that more than one state is in a similar situation and others have shrunken funds.

This operator, in hindsight, wishes he had maintained the status quo in the soft market and not

changed carriers to save money in the short term.

Now, he faces serious financial issues. He is left with the responsibility of defending himself and putting in serious jeopardy the assets he has worked his entire professional career to acquire.

The lesson here is that cheap insurance can turn out to be quite expensive. There is only a handful of insurance carriers and brokers who have the resources, experience, expertise and commitment to service the needs of the motorcoach industry.

It is best to remember this during all the insurance cycles. Many carriers that have tried to become experts, only to fail, litter the landscape.

Very simply, they underestimated their exposures and didn't have the claims handling expertise and financial resources to deal with the issues that confronted them. A quick fix in the short term rarely works in the long run.

Peter R. Cohen is regional vice president and director of transportation marketing for Capacity Coverage Company in Mahwah, N.J.

Commercial insurance prices still dropping

NEW YORK — A nationwide survey has found that commercial insurance premiums continued to decline during the second quarter, with the "soft" insurance market showing no signs of abating.

According to an assessment of

policy renewal prices as reported by corporate risk managers, lower premiums were reported for workers compensation insurance, down 1.82 percent; general liability insurance, down 1.16 percent, and director-and-officer liability insur-

ance, down 7.29 percent.

The rate picture for property insurance wasn't as clear cut.

Although rate decreases were reported by 70 percent of survey respondents, there was no change on average for property rates.

REPAIR, RENEW AND MORE WITH COLLISION SERVICES FROM ABC.

Whether you've had a serious accident, a fender bender or want to add a wheelchair lift feature to your equipment — **ABC Collision Repair & Retrofit** is the clear choice!

Our crew of collision-repair technicians, service technicians and **wheelchair lift install specialists** offer the widest range of professional repair and refurbishment services that can add years of life to your equipment including:

- Major Collision Repair
- Paint, Custom Graphics and Body Services
- Wheelchair Lift Installation
- Coach and Transit Refurbishment

Drive into any world-class ABC facility, and experience the expertise of ABC collision professionals.



Exclusive U.S.  Distributor

www.abc-companies.com

MIDWEST

800-222-2875

NORTHEAST

800-222-2873

SOUTHEAST

800-222-2871

SOUTHWEST

800-222-2877

WESTERN

800-322-2877

Glaval targets 'Synergy' for motorcoach operators

ELKHART, Ind. — Glaval Bus is cranking up production of its new midsize luxury coach, the Synergy, that offers many of the amenities found on more expensive vehicles and can even be equipped with a private lounge.

Glaval sees the Synergy as an option for operators looking for a bus to handle smaller groups, yet provide the luxury the traveling public demands.

Char Miller, spokeswoman for Glaval, says the company is now producing two Synergy coaches a week and that 10 are already on the road.

The price range is from \$235,000-\$240,000-plus, depending on the options, says Miller.

The 38-foot, 41-passenger Synergy is built on a raised-rail Freightliner chassis, with a Cummins ISB 275-horsepower rear engine. Glaval says the nine-inch-frame-rail construction creates a solid foundation that minimizes stress on the coach so windows and doors perform properly for the life of the vehicle.

"Also, with the rail construction, you can get up to 275 cubic



feet of storage space under the vehicle, with access from either side," Miller says.

"It has large interior and exterior engine access panels and smooth floor cove molding that is rounded at the wall for easy maintenance. There are no corners or cracks for dirt to stick in."

"It also has electronically controlled, heated exterior mirrors, and electric windshield shades. If the bus is going to be parked for a while, the driver can bring the windshield shade completely down for privacy."

Miller says Freightliner's chassis with its ZF independent front suspension offers "the tightest turning radius of any chassis on the

market." The enhanced maneuverability, says Miller, means bus operators will be able to better negotiate their way through the toughest roads, parks and tourist attractions.

What's more, the chassis has a Neway air suspension and Sachs shocks for improved stability, handling and increased driver comfort, she said. The system also provides for a softer ride.

In addition, equalizer beams and rigid trailing arms control axle movement, drive and brake reaction, and vertical load. The company says stabilizer bars and beams widen effective load centers on the rear axle, maintaining a high resistance to vehicle roll.

The Allison 3000 transmission has electronic controls for smooth shifting and improved fuel economy. An exhaust brake offers increased brake and tire life, as well as greater vehicle control by quickly and safely slowing the vehicle under stress conditions.

The air-conditioning system is from Carrier.

Miller says the rear-engine Cummins diesel provides quieter, more comfortable rides, lower fuel costs and effortless hill climbing.

Freightliner, with a network of more than 350 dealers, will provide customer support, according to Miller.

The Synergy can be equipped with a restroom, of course, but also available is a rear lounge option.

"It's a separate room that could be used for extra storage or luggage."

Miller says. "It has a door and, as a lounge, features horseshoe seating that folds out into two sleeper sofas. It's an option for passengers or for the driver, who could use it to rest while waiting for passengers to return from sightseeing.

It has separate climate controls,

and a flat-screen, 20-inch TV and a DVD package. It could be used by a celebrity or for a bridal party," she says.

Development of the Synergy began six years ago but was put on the back burner after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

"In the last year and a half we all got together to develop the right bus," says Miller.

Glaval touts the Synergy for all types of customers, including students, professional and collegiate sports teams, conventions, sightseeing trips, corporate groups, and private parties.

The Synergy offers an array of standard and optional features, including large panoramic windows, reclining seats, foot rests, overhead storage racks with individual reading lamps, speakers and climate control, passenger window shades, magazine pockets, individual tray tables, beverage holders, and one or more televisions with DVD capabilities.

It has the same luxury and amenities of "larger, more expensive buses at a more affordable price," says Miller.

NIMCO/Bus Division

**973 589-9265 • Toll Free 800-526-8055
FAX 973-589-2253 • P.O. BOX 5157 • NEWARK, NJ 07105
www.nimcobus.com**

*Supplying the Transportation Industry with
Used, Serviceable & Rebuildable Bus Parts
for Over 25 Years!*

VOLUME DISCOUNTS • PRIDE IN PERFORMANCE

**DEEP DISCOUNTS!
on all Detroit Diesel & Allison
Transmissions**

SAVE MONEY ~ SAVE TIME

We sell good running qualified bus components.

NO RISK PURCHASE PLAN

We unconditionally guarantee our customers satisfaction.

WE ALSO STOCK

- Front and Rear Axle Parts • Engine Accessories
- Alternators and other Electrical Components
- Air Conditioning Components • Body Parts

We Buy & Sell Buses... Call for a Quote

SEFAC Mobile Column Lifts

800.826.3486
www.sefac.com

Here are descriptions for all Bus Academy classes

Here is a list and description of the initial classes being offered by the Bus and Motorcoach Academy.

Operator classes

Business and Marketing I. Provides the materials needed to start your motorcoach business right and keep it running smoothly. Even if you already own your business, the topics in this course will help you keep your business on track. Topics include building your business plan, business law, marketing and business ethics.

Business and Marketing II. Provides an opportunity to become familiar with job costing and estimating, customer service, cost control, and risk management for the motorcoach industry.

Financial Management. Explores the intricacies of financing your business, basics of finance and accounting, software to assist with accounting and basics of federal income tax accounting.

Safety and Compliance. Explores issues of safety and regulatory compliance. Topics include driver compliance issues, inspection and maintenance, security, safety ratings, and regulatory compliance.

Human Resources. Overview of issues related to the people employed by a motorcoach business. Topics include: hours of service; employment law; employee relations; recruiting, hiring, retaining and training, and compensation.

Driver classes

Driver Qualifications. Provides an overview of the motorcoach industry, information about typical company rules and policies, and an

Academy

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Registration can be done online, although you will have to complete both an application form and a registration form and pay fees by credit card. Registration also can be done by mail or fax by completing a registration form and mailing a check for the fees.

Help for any issues is a phone call or e-mail away.

For logging on and general assistance, contact the Information Center at (301) 934-7765 or send an e-mail to info@csmd.edu; for registration issues, contact the registrar's office at (301) 934-7558, or send an e-mail to registrar@csmd.edu; and for billing issues, contact the bursar's office at (301) 934-7712, or send an e-mail to bursars@csmd.edu.

Companies interested in group discounts may contact Mark Gedris at UMA at (800) 424-8262 or e-mail mgedris@uma.org.

overview of federal, state and local laws and regulations pertaining to the motorcoach industry. Other topics include personal health for the motorcoach operator, issues of driver fatigue, and hours of service.

Vehicle Maintenance. Provides an opportunity to become familiar

with motorcoach equipment and its usage, procedures to follow in the event of a breakdown or emergency, and explores the area of fuel economy.

Safe Driving. Explores safe driving procedures under normal and special conditions, off-road

vehicle handling, and in-depth case studies in safety as related to the motorcoach industry.

Passenger Issues. Provides an overview of passenger issues, including special needs passengers, special considerations for school buses, transit considerations, and

issues of customer service and customer care.

Security. Provides an overview of operations security requirements, guidelines and procedures relevant to the driver, including crisis response and the Highway Watch Program.

TAKE CONTROL



ELITE ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM



- (6) 15.4" Motorized Flip-Down Monitors
- Elite Audio System w/ Subwoofers
- Seat Audio Headphone System w/ 8 Channels of Audio

- 8 Channel Digital MP-3 Audio Player
- Digital Video Player w/ Full Automatic GPS Control and/or Driver Controller
- DVD Player

- CD Player
- Scenic View Camera System
- Wireless Microphone System
- Computer/Video Camera Input
- IPOD Input

3 YEAR WARRANTY

24/7 TECHNICAL SUPPORT

OVERNIGHT EXCHANGE SERVICE WITH FREE SHIPPING



REI

Sales & Service
1.800.228.9275

6534 L Street Omaha, Nebraska 68117 • www.radioeng.com

24 Hour Service
1.877.726.4617

Stick with the Trusted. DEMAND REI.

The dollars & sense of onboard entertainment systems

By Dave Millhouser
ABC Companies

As the charter coach neared Denver's Bronco Stadium, the driver saw movement reflected in his interior mirror.

The lavatory door opened and out popped an exotic dancer.

She gyrated down the aisle, arriving at the stepwell just in time to bedazzle the driver AND the policemen directing traffic in the parking lot. The passengers were entertained...and they got a great parking space.

Motorcoach entertainment systems have come a long way since this early, biological, version. We're at the point where charter coaches, and many line buses, must have some form of video system.

It started in 1950's with the public address system, and it's still important that drivers have the ability to communicate with your customers.

Good drivers find a balance between being informative and entertaining; they can make you look good and improve their tips.

Airlines teach captains the art

of "announcing," and a bit of training wouldn't hurt our industry.

Entertainment systems have become increasingly complex, and



Dave Millhouser

two things are critical. It has gotta work, and your driver must know how to run it. Mess up either, and your customer wants a refund.

Some operators retrofit new video systems on older coaches. Not a bad idea, unless you put a \$4,000 system in a \$10,000 bus.

If you retrofit, there are a couple of things to consider.

No. 1, don't be tempted to buy household DVD's and monitors. Components built for vehicles are better at withstanding extreme temperatures, vibration and voltage spikes.

Second, buy a system, rather than individual components cobbled together. That eliminates various suppliers pointing fingers at each other.

The installer must know what

he or she is doing or you'll get odd sounds (best case) or a burning bus (worst case). Monitor placement and mounting is critical. Although some of us enjoy watching it, head cracking isn't entertaining to the victim.

If possible, install LCD monitors, they use less current (alternators are already working hard) and run cooler.

New coach buyers are confronted with a variety of choices. Which features (and how many) you choose should be market driven. What will attract new customers to your coaches? And what will they be willing to pay for?

Money spent on features that aren't necessary is not only wasted but you're stuck with maintaining this stuff. None of it, beyond a basic video system, is likely to enhance resale value, so it should pay for itself while you own the coach.

Some features for you to consider: Karaoke, passenger visible GPS, multi-channel individual headsets, satellite radio and TV, forward-view camera, and high-end sound systems are all current-

ly available. Each is worth considering, but always in light of its ability to attract customers or revenue.

Bear in mind that any system you choose that involves headsets comes with the added expense of either cleaning or replacing them with each use.

Most manufacturers give you a choice of mounting the DVD in the dash, or in the package rack. There are advantages to each, and the choice may depend on who you want operating the system (passengers vs. driver).

Licensing, on both satellite and DVD, is critical. Some operators feel protected when playing customer provided DVDs. Taint so.

If you're confused, check with the United Motorcoach or America Bus associations. The entertainment industry is cracking down on unlicensed use of their product, and fines can be heavy.

A new development is the use of huge LCD screens mounted in the package rack (not below it). These offer superb view of the movie without sacrificing forward

visibility. The trade-off is loss of overhead bin space.

At least one operator is using these in conjunction with computer-generated, GPS-triggered vignettes of attractions — at the moment the coach approaches them. There is also the possibility of generating revenue, by selling advertisements.

It's possible, on this sophisticated system to show different features on each monitor.

Video screens mounted in seat backs are available today, but the cost remains high. In time they may be right for more niches.

Generally, all of this technology has grown less expensive, and more reliable. That doesn't alter the fact that it needs to be paid for and maintained, over the time you own the coach, so make an effort to choose wisely.

Funny, I still remember the charter, but can't remember who won the Bronco's game. Now that was an entertainment system.

Dave Millhouser is an account representative for ABC Companies. Contact him at: dmillhouser@abc-companies.com.

We Purchase Salvage Buses



- All Makes & Models
- Collision & Fire Buses

For More Information Call

1-800-222-2875

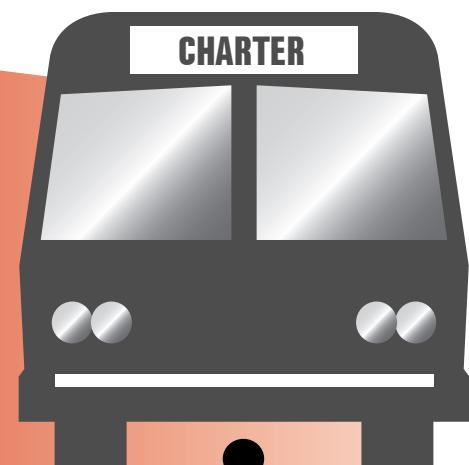
Burt Edmunds ext. 157

Greg Dotseth ext. 147 or 152

ABC
PRE-OWNED PARTS

www.abc-companies.com

CHARTER
Dump CLEAN...
Dump LEGAL!



WASHROOM WASTE DISPOSAL UNIT
Installs directly into your
existing sewer system!

Lavatory dump hopper is assembled and ready to install in your existing sewer system. Its cover plate is easily rolled back with the remover tool. Each of your service lanes can easily be equipped with this time-saving unit, which has been the industry standard for over thirty years. All major credit cards accepted.

Call 1-866-LAV-DUMP or email lavdump@yahoo.com for additional information.

Washroom waste is removed quickly, easily and safely

HUDSON RIVER CORPORATION

Call toll free: 1-866-LAV-DUMP | Fax: 1-201-420-3322

ABC Cos. targets Canada, names account representative

FARIBAULT, Minn. — ABC Companies is expanding its marketing of Van Hool motorcoaches and ABC midsize buses in Canada, using its recent acquisition of Muncie Transit Supply and its subsidiary, Baker Transit Parts, to support the effort.

ABC said it has appointed its first Canadian account executive, John McFarlane, and designated two key executives to provide parts support and technical assistance.

As part of the push, ABC said it sold 10 new Van Hool C2045 coaches to Traxx Coachlines of Medicine Hat, Alberta.

McFarlane, working with senior ABC executives, completed the sale to Traxx, which is a 75-year-old company that began by offering taxi service. It moved into school buses in the late 1940s and began motorcoach and charter service 14 years ago.

Through the years it has operated under the names Radcliff Bus Lines and Tot-em Transportation but, when it was sold three years ago and began expanding into the U.S. Pacific Northwest, it ran into trademark and brand name conflicts, changing its name to Traxx Coachlines.

Log developed just for coaches

TORONTO — Motor Coach Canada has developed a bus industry-specific driver logbook and daily vehicle inspection report that it is selling to coach operators.

Brian Crow, president and CEO of Motor Coach Canada, said the log and vehicle inspection report were developed from the ground up in response to member requests for a logbook and inspection report designed exclusively for the bus industry.

"In developing this product, we listened closely to what our members were telling us they'd like to see in a daily log," said Dave Carroll, director of safety and maintenance for Motor Coach Canada. "As a result, our log book incorporates several features that set (it) apart from other logbooks available from commercial sources."

Carroll said the book meets Canada's new hours of service regulations, as well as Canada's new daily vehicle inspection regulations. (See June 1 and July 1 issues of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

It's also valid for travel in the U.S.

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

A native of Scotland and raised in Toronto, McFarlane lived and worked in Calgary, Alberta, prior to moving to the United States. His background includes being director of operations for a large California retail chain and vice president of sales for a West Coast

specialty electronic components group.

Supporting McFarlane and the Canadian expansion will be Marv Borntrager, ABC technical support manager, and Craig Parsley, vice president and general manager of Baker Transit Parts of

Sombra, Ontario.

ABC said it planned to offer new and pre-owned equipment to Canadian operators, including the full line of Van Hool coaches, as well as ABC's private-label mid-size buses.

A Canada-based parts distribu-

tion center, plus leasing and financial support, via ABC Financial, are planned to support the business.



John McFarlane

**OIL THAT
HELPS
YOU CHANGE
OIL LESS?
WHAT ARE
WE THINKING?**

Hypuron™

We're thinking of saving you money. Because when oil is engineered right, your buses can rack up more miles between oil changes. Hypuron is uniquely engineered with a high Total Base Number and low ash content, so you can safely extend your fleet's drains beyond normal intervals. Don't buy more oil. Buy more miles. Call 800-255-4417 for more info. Or check out castrol.com/hypuron

IT'S MORE THAN JUST OIL. IT'S LIQUID ENGINEERING.

REI makes successful push into Latin American market

MARACAIBO, Venezuela — When national soccer teams from throughout the Western Hemisphere descended on Venezuela last month for the CopaAmerica tournament, the new motorcoaches used to transport the teams to nine Venezuelan cities were exclusively outfitted with audio-video equipment supplied by Radio Engineering Industries of Brazil Ltd.

The National Urban Transit Foundation in Venezuela purchased the 100 buses from Brazilian manufacturer Marcopolo and specified the REI equipment. The coaches were being converted to daily service after the tournament, which was

won by Brazil in a 3-0 match with Argentina.

REI's international director, Chris Sweeden, said that having REI "systems on these 'Fútbol' buses was a great distinction, and one for which I take great personal pride."

Omaha, Neb.-based REI began expanding into South America three

years ago, using São Paulo, Brazil as its Latin American headquarters.

"From the very outset, REI Brazil's philosophy has been to provide extraordinary service after the sale, and since these coaches will remain in Venezuela, I believe this demonstrates Marcopolo's confidence in our ability to provide

that level of service, not only in Brazil, but throughout Latin America," Sweeden said.

South American sales are expected to exceed \$5 million (U.S.) this year, and REI anticipates continuing to increase its market share throughout the region. Besides Marcopolo, REI Brazil supplies video systems to such OEM's as Busscar and CAIO, as well as end users across the continent.

In addition to having sales/service locations in Brazil, REI also has sales and service centers in Chile, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela.

New technologies increase choices for coach owners

OMAHA, Neb. — In recent few years, new technologies have been introduced to the motorcoach industry that have vastly increased the number of entertainment options from which operators have to choose.

In-motion satellite dishes, satellite radio, LCD flat-panel monitors, navigation systems, and DVD players are just some of the products introduced.

In fact, DVD players have totally replaced video-cassette players. This is due to cassette tapes becoming more difficult to locate and the increased reliability of DVD players over cassette players.

The new technologies have not only produced new products but also added a new level of flexibility and reliability.

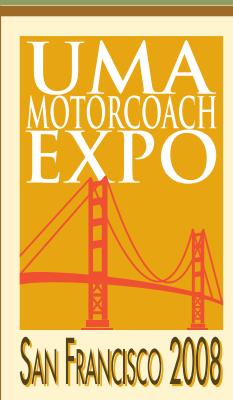
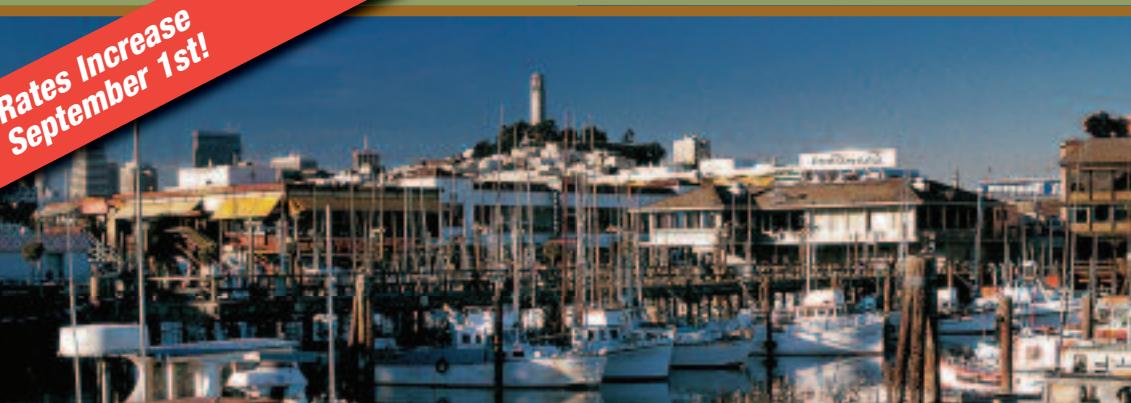
For example, REI has developed a digital MP3 player that provides eight channels of audio simultaneously. With this new technology, audio content is recorded onto a compact flash card and inserted into the player.

In addition, REI offers a digital audio/video player that can operate without driver intervention by using GPS coordinates to activate the system. When drivers want to override the automatic GPS feature, REI offers a keypad that can be placed in the driver area.

A major advantage of this type of digital technology is the reliability it provides. There are no moving parts to wear over time. In addition, software programs can be designed into digital products making them a universal solution.

To incorporate these new technologies into a convenient and user friendly solution, REI developed its Elite-model entertainment system, the culmination of REI being the leading supplier of motorcoach entertainment systems for the past 25 years.

Rates Increase
September 1st!



UMA MOTORCOACH EXPO SAN FRANCISCO, CA JANUARY 16-20, 2008

The 2008 UMA Motorcoach Expo website is live and registration has begun!



www.motorcoachexpo.com has answers to all **UMA Motorcoach Expo** questions. Here you can find the full schedule of events, registration rates, travel information, and much more!



Top 5 Reasons you NEED to attend Motorcoach Expo in San Francisco:

1. Easy to get to with two international airports to choose from – Oakland and San Francisco.
2. Invaluable networking opportunities! Mingle with all associated with the motorcoach industry in just 4 days!
3. Only place to get continuing education credits for the Bus & Motorcoach Academy.
4. Only time to experience San Francisco at discounted rates. Come and take a tour of the city at reduced prices on a variety of city tours.
5. Cheapest registration rates are right now. Registration rates increase September 1st!

To register today or for more information visit, www.motorcoachexpo.com



United
Motorcoach
Association

San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau photos

Oil giants, fuel retailers sued over hot-fuel issue

The debate over "hot fuel" is being waged on the Internet, in newspapers, in Congress, and now it's also making its way into the courtroom.

Hundreds of consumers, truck drivers and others in more than a dozen states are suing oil companies and fuel retailers, alleging they have been overcharging fuel buyers by billions of dollars.

The suits contend that higher temperatures of gasoline and diesel fuel cost consumers and commercial vehicle operators between 3 and 9 cents a gallon extra at the pump.

The litigation seeks to force the oil industry to install gas pumps that have temperature-compensation equipment.

The lawsuits are known to have been filed in California, Delaware, New Jersey, Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Louisiana, New Mexico, Nevada, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee and Georgia.

Dan Gilligan, president of the Petroleum Marketers Association of America, predicts the suits will fail because they allege fraud, which he says has not occurred.

He also disputes the billion-dollar estimates of costs to consumers.

"There is so much misinformation put out by people doing guesses," he told one national publication. "They have no idea what the temperature at the nozzle is. We need facts, not hype."

The legal battle centers on century-old oil industry fuel pricing practices and competing scientific and mathematical testimony from experts on both sides. The price of gasoline has been based since the 1920s on a formula that measures a gallon of gas when it is 60 degrees, say several of the suits.

According to industry and government standards, a gallon of gas at 60 degrees measures 231 cubic inches. Consumers buy 231 cubic inches of gas per gallon, regardless

of its temperature, so when gas expands in the heat, the amount of energy put out per gallon declines.

The industry routinely makes price adjustments for temperature fluctuations for wholesalers, but not consumers, according to the court filings.

Many of the suits were consolidated early this summer in federal court in Kansas and assigned to U.S. District Judge Kathryn Vratil, who will oversee preliminary hearings. More than 100 defendants are named in the lawsuits, ranging from oil industry giants such as ExxonMobil and Chevron, to retailers including Wal-Mart, QuikTrip and 7-Eleven.

The plaintiffs include hundreds of motorists, plus long-haul truckers and other commercial driver groups.

Gilligan says the cost of installing temperature-adjustment equipment would be prohibitive. NATSO, a trade group that represents truck stop operators, has estimated the cost of equipping each pump at between \$1,500 and \$3,800.

"It's our view, generally speaking, that most Americans are made whole in the course of a year," Gilligan says. "They lose BTUs in the summer, but gain them back in the winter."

However, the consumers' attorneys say that in Canada — where gas temperatures are generally colder, and the advantage shifts to the consumer — temperature-adjustment equipment already has been installed at the gas pump.

George Zelk, a Chicago attorney representing truck drivers in several states, says the oil industry wants it both ways.

"The industry has pushed for this temperature adjustment in Canada, where they lose money, where it's colder than 60 degrees, and opposed it in the United States where it's warmer than 60 degrees," he says.

only be used to support buses that provided mass transportation and, in this case, the trolley bus only provided charters. The trolley bus itself had not been paid for using federal money.

The FTA ordered Rome Transit to immediately cease and desist from any use of the federally-paid-for facility to house, maintain and/or operate the trolley.

The regional administrator "recognized that RTD was operating a sham but rather than split hairs over the operation of a bus not purchased with federal funds, she chose to go after the bigger picture," said Ken Presley, UMA vice president of industry relations.

'Hot Fuel'

Congressmen jump on hot-button issue

WASHINGTON — A group of Democratic Congressmen has asked the National Conference on Weights and Measures to address the issue of the impact of summer temperatures on the volume of gasoline and diesel delivered to fuel buyers by retail outlets.

And, in a related development, a leading California fuel retailer has announced it plans to alert consumers that temperature can affect the amount of energy they receive when pumping fuel.

A spokeswoman for Tesoro Corp. said the company plans to put decals on its retail fuel pumps in California stating that, based on temperature, the amount of energy in a gallon of fuel can vary.

The decals will state: "This pump dispenses motor fuel by volume measured in standard gallons (231 cubic inches), as certified by the California Division of Measurement Standards, without adjusting for possible variations due to temperature or other factors which may affect the energy content of each standard gallon

dispensed."

"Tesoro did make a business decision to apply decals on our pumps in California," spokeswoman Sarah Phipps told a trucking publication. "However, we want to make it clear that we are squarely aligned with the industry on there being no merit to the hot fuels claims."

"Hot fuel" refers to gasoline and diesel fuel sold by retailers at temperatures above the national standard of 60 degrees.

Last month, the first Congressional hearings on hot fuel were conducted in California. Some of the House members who were at the hearing and two senators — all Democrats — sent a letter to the chairman of the national weights and measures trade organization.

"As you are aware, a recent report conducted by subcommittee staff indicates that this practice will cost the American consumer an estimated \$1.5 billion in the summer of 2007 alone," wrote Rep. Dennis Kucinich, D-Ohio,

chairman of the subcommittee on domestic policy of the House Committee of Oversight and Government Affairs.

The letter was sent to Michael Cleary, chairman of the National Conference on Weights and Measures.

One of the missions of the conference is to standardize measurements on behalf of consumers.

Critics of the fuel industry want gasoline and diesel retailers to install automatic temperature-compensation equipment on their fuel pumps.

As it stands now, say critics, retailers and oil companies profit from hot temperatures while compensating for temperature fluctuations at every stage of trade, except at the retail pumps.

"This is simply unacceptable," Kucinich wrote.

The American Petroleum Institute opposes "temp comp" because it says the cost of retrofitting existing fuel pumps would outweigh the benefits to consumers.

Hot fuel Website, campaign launched

GRAIN VALLEY, Mo. — An Internet campaign has been launched to educate consumers about how "hot fuel" may be forcing them to pay more for diesel fuel and gasoline.

The "Turn Down Hot Fuel" campaign is being spearheaded by the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association and features a Website, www.turndownhotfuel.com.

The phrase "hot fuel" refers to expanded diesel fuel or gasoline that is sold at retail pumps at temperatures higher than the century-old government standard of 60 degrees. That is the temperature/volume used by the petro-chemical

industry to measure all petroleum liquids at the refinery and every point after the refinery, except at the retail pump.

At the 60-degree standard, a gallon of fuel delivers a certain amount of measurable energy. But when expanded by higher temperatures, that same amount of fuel delivers less energy. The warmer the fuel, the less measurable energy and fewer miles to the gallon a vehicle will receive.

Devices, called automatic temperature compensation retrofit kits, can be installed on retail pumps to compensate for the difference.

According to OOIDA, there's a

widespread belief that filling a fuel tank in the morning will save money. But generally that is not true.

"The temperature of fuel in underground storage tanks does not change dramatically enough during a 24-hour cycle," said OOIDA Project Leader John Siebert.

There also is a mistaken belief that in-ground tanks keep fuel at 60 degrees Fahrenheit. In fact, the insulated, fiberglass tanks at filling stations tend to keep fuel at the temperature it was delivered.

Larger retailers turn over fuel supplies rapidly, greatly reducing the time the fuel spends in the tanks.

FTA ruling

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

arrangement produced thousands of dollars in additional income.

But while the FTA ruling said Rome Transit breached the spirit and intent of charter rules in its dealings with Shuttle Tran, it did not technically violate charter bus regulations because Rome Transit is legally entitled to lease equipment to Shuttle Tran.

Still, the FTA did rule that Rome Transit clearly violated federal regulations by operating and maintaining the trolley bus out of a facility that was paid for with federal tax dollars. Such facilities can

Presley says that because of its misrepresentations, Rome transit should be compelled to refund the federal money it used to operate and maintain the trolley bus. In their decision, Taylor and Jensen said the issue of "any remittance and reimbursement for the improper use of the facility for storing and maintaining the trolley bus will be addressed separately."

"Although she (Taylor) punted ... on whether the charters were in violation, she went straight for the FTA win," said Presley.

"There is significant precedence in this ruling that we will likely be quoting for a long time," he noted.

Laidlaw, FirstGroup give feds more time

NAPERVILLE, Ill.—Laidlaw International and FirstGroup PLC have formally agreed to give the antitrust division of the U.S. Justice Department more time to study FirstGroup's takeover of Laidlaw.

Laidlaw announced at its annual meeting last month that it intended to comply with the Justice Department's request for more time to study the deal.

Under the agreement, the earliest the takeover could be completed is Sept. 15, unless the Justice Department gives its blessing to an earlier date.

Laidlaw said in a statement that it and FirstGroup remain com-

mitted to working with the Justice Department "as it conducts its review of the merger and to completing the merger."

Meanwhile, FirstGroup and Laidlaw have cleared at least one regulatory hurdle. FirstGroup announced that the Canadian Competition Bureau had approved its proposed purchase of Laidlaw, which owns Greyhound Lines.

In its announcement, FirstGroup noted that the Canadian approval is conditional on the companies successfully clearing antitrust hurdles in the U.S.

FirstGroup and Laidlaw entered into their merger agreement on Feb. 8.

Complete Coach Works

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Commuter Coach models, plus two models of Wanderlodges, the 450LXi and the M380, to Complete Coach Works.

Terms were not disclosed.

Another important — but less obvious — aspect of the deal is what it does for Complete Coach Works and the potential to grow its industry leading bus remanufactur-

ing, retrofitting, upgrading and related operations.

Complete Coach Works President and CEO Dale Carson said the acquisition "represents a perfect fit and will provide an opportunity for the expansion of our operations to the Southeast."

Complete Coach Works and its affiliated companies, Shuttle Bus Leasing and Transit Sales International, are industry institutions on the U.S. West Coast.

From its 10-acre facility in

Riverside, Calif., Complete Coach Works serves customers from Canada to the tip of South America.

Since it was founded 20 years ago by Dale and Dean Carson, it has become a leading innovator in bus modifications, remanufacturing, repowers, hybrid conversions and upgrades.

In addition, it remanufactures Allison transmissions, is a strategic service partner with Daimler-Chrysler Commercial Buses and Setra, installs wheelchair lifts by

the hundreds, handles fire and accident repairs, and converts buses to whatever use a customer wants.

Its Transit Sales International affiliate has the world's largest inventory of used buses.

Complete Coach Works intends to upgrade and modernize the 32-acre Blue Bird Coachworks operation, probably hiring more workers as it does, said company spokesman Macy Neshati. "It's a factory that is just getting a little long in the tooth. We mean to clean

up, fix up and follow up.

"We want it to be a plant that puts out world-class, world-leading products."

Just as Complete Coach Works is a fixture in California, Blue Bird is an institution in central Georgia. The company has been through enough ups, downs and shocks during the past dozen years to match any in its 80-year history.

It has changed hands multiple times and it has lost its position as the nation's leading producer of school buses.

Under its restructuring, Blue Bird aims to recapture more of the market it once dominated and where it remains an icon, said Ron Smith, company marketing director. "When you talk about a quality school bus, it is Blue Bird."

Blue Bird has about 1,300 employees in the school bus unit, compared with about 125 across the street at the Coachworks and Wanderlodge operation. Blue Bird also has about 400 employees in LaFayette, in north Georgia.

The acquisition comes as Blue Bird Coachworks is completing a 26-bus order for Veolia Transportation of Oak Brook, Ill., the large passenger transportation company formed two years ago by Connex North America and ATC, and it's starting work on a multi-unit order for the federal government.

Shortly, the Wanderlodge unit will roll out its 2008 Wanderlodge Motor Home, a substantially upgraded model.

Rating

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

compliance review consisted of looking at log books and driver records, and checking company insurance policies.

C&R received a satisfactory safety rating following a similar compliance review in March. The company had two vehicles and three drivers.

The investigation of the crash by the Kentucky State Police found that the bus was overcrowded and had improper registration. There were 66 people on a coach that had seats for 55.

The license plate on the coach belonged to a different bus and expired this year, police said. The tag that belonged on the bus expired in 2005.

"They took registration from a properly registered bus, or their other bus, and put it on this bus so it would be legal as it went down the road, or appeared to be legal," said Kentucky State Police Trooper Todd Holder.

Neither the registration issue nor the number of people on board caused the wreck, police said.

Keep up with everything in the motorcoach industry!

The New Bus & Motorcoach NEWS Website

www.busandmotorcoachnews.com

UMA Members, log on today and check out the features:

- **Electronic access to all articles**
- **Search archives by keyword(s)**
- **View previous issues**
- **E-mail articles to friends or colleagues**
- **Instant access to industry calendar**
- **Electronically submit news for publication**



Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

4930 West Glendale Avenue, Ste. 6

Glendale, AZ 85301

(P): 866-930-8421

(F): 866-930-8426

E-mail: info@busandmotorcoachnews.com

To join United Motorcoach Association,

go to: www.UMA.org

Coach-specific products announced by ASA Electronics

Elkhart, Ind. — ASA Electronics continues to expand its product offerings to motorcoach and bus operators.

Here's a sampling of what's new:

- Jensen PADIN3 PA/DVD Controller. With the Jensen PADIN3, bus operators have a less expensive option for public address controllers that can fully operate a DVD player. The PADIN3 has partitioned audio, with separate controls for driver and passenger speakers, allowing either the driver or the passengers the ability to listen to any of the available audio or video sources.

In the tradition of effective PA systems, the PADIN3 will override all speakers when the microphone is keyed. But, unlike competing systems, the PADIN3 utilizes "media pause" that also pauses the video when a mic is initiated.

This PA/DVD controller also features large, user-friendly buttons; a larger, easy-to-read LCD display; three microphone inputs, and two auxiliary audio inputs.

- Jensen 15-inch LCD Bus Monitors. The Jensen JE1569BMK

Coach operators meet this month for conference

MATTESON, Ill. — The annual conference of the National Association of Motorcoach Operators (NAMO), featuring seminars, presentations, workshops and social activities, will be conducted here Aug. 16-19.

The association, whose membership is primarily composed of small and minority-owned coach companies, has sessions scheduled on industry legislation, insurance, finance, government regulations, grants, and new engines and equipment.

Prevost Car, Motor Coach Industries, DaimlerChrysler-Setra, Bus & Coach International and ABC Companies-Van Hool are expected to have coaches on display at the host hotel, the Holiday Inn-Matteson.

Matteson is a suburb of Chicago on the city's far south side.

The conference opens Thursday evening, Aug. 16, with a welcoming reception. NAMO President Gene Wright of B&W Charters in Kalamazoo, Mich., will host the event.

For more information, contact Daryl Johnson of J&J Charters in Crosby, Texas. Call him at (281) 328-6036 or (713) 823-7550, or e-mail him at jjcharters@aol.com.

15.4-inch Widescreen LCD Bus Wedge Monitor and the Jensen JE1569FDM 15.4-inch Widescreen LCD Flip-down Monitor offers high quality, big-screen bus video. Both monitor styles are designed to replace old CRT monitors, and they withstand vibrations, humidity and temperature changes.

- Jensen JHD1510 Heavy Duty AM/FM/CD/Weatherband/SIRIUS Satellite & iPod® Ready Radio with Integrated Mic Input. Same as the JHD1510 but it also includes a CD player.

- Jensen JHD3510 Heavy Duty

AM/FM/CD/Weatherband/SIRIUS Satellite & iPod® Ready Radio with Integrated Mic Input. Same as the JHD1510 but it also includes a CD player.

- Jensen JE1029RFK Universal LCD Upgrade Kit. Designed specifically for MCI coaches, it features a high-resolution, wide-

screen 10.2-inch LCD monitor.

ASA Electronics was recently named an authorized distributor of KVH mobile satellite TV antenna systems. ASA will be providing various KVH satellite TV systems, including the KVH TracVision A7 In-Motion Satellite TV System, to the bus industry.

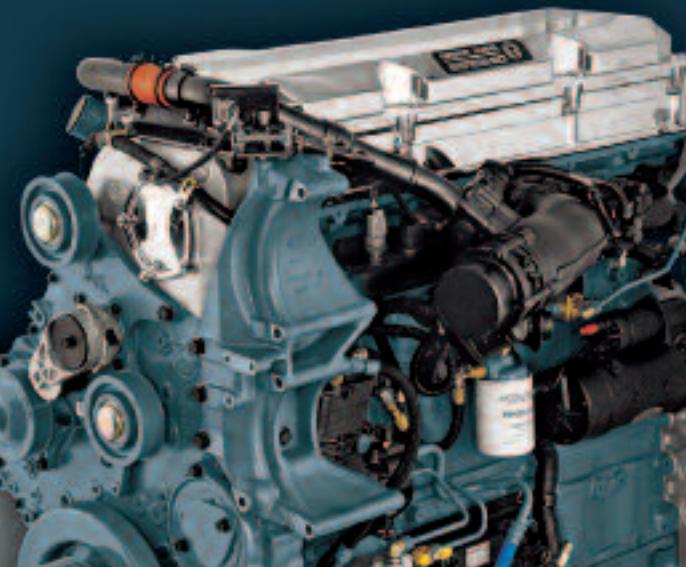


YOU GET THEM ON THE BUS. WE'LL TAKE IT FROM THERE.

For decades Detroit Diesel engines have provided the reliable, efficient performance you depend on. After millions of miles of successful testing, our EPA '07 engines are ready to support you. We are committed to the things you need to deliver passengers on time, like reliability, service and parts availability. Because when we do our part, you can focus on other things – like keeping your coaches filled with people. Learn more at www.detroitdiesel.com.

DETROIT DIESEL

www.detroitdiesel.com Specifications are subject to change without notice. Detroit Diesel and the spinning arrows design are registered trademarks of Detroit Diesel. © 2006, Freightliner LLC. All rights reserved. Detroit Diesel is a member of the Freightliner Group. Freightliner LLC is a DaimlerChrysler company.



MCI adds software to aid inventory parts planning

BELMONT, Mass.— Smart Software Inc., a provider of demand forecasting, planning and inventory optimization software, announced that Motor Coach Industries has purchased Smart's flagship product, SmartForecasts Enterprise, to help improve inventory management of its parts operation.

MCI will use SmartForecasts' patented intermittent demand forecasting and planning capabilities to improve forecasting and inventory stocking processes at its 12 North American parts facilities and service centers.

SmartForecasts also will help MCI streamline its vendor-managed inventory business, increasing parts availability and providing better customer service.

MCI has 41,000 active part numbers, and close to 75 percent of the parts have hard-to-forecast, intermittent demand patterns.

Before SmartForecasts, MCI forecasted about half of the parts manually at each of its service centers.

This process was time consuming and did not lead to optimized inventory levels. MCI knew it could improve its forecasting and planning procedures and began an evaluation of leading demand planning, forecasting, and inventory optimization software systems.

"An important part of our evaluation compared stocking level estimates provided by the different vendors. SmartForecasts' stocking level estimates were the most accurate and resulted in not only lower projected inventory costs but also a higher projected service level," said Stan Dzierzega, inventory planning manager and project leader at MCI.

"In addition to improving our service levels and reducing costs, we expect SmartForecasts will help us to reduce our demand planning workload."

\$14 million at stake Coach buy in Canada turns political

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — The purchase of 30 Setra motorcoaches by Canada's Department of Defense has become something of a political football.

A member of parliament from Winnipeg, Pat Martin, has criticized Canada's conservative government for picking Setras, which are manufactured in Germany, over models made by Motor Coach Industries, which operates a large plant in Winnipeg, for the \$14-million Defense Department contract.

The premier of Manitoba, Gary Doer, also got in the act, writing to Manitoba's senior conservative MP, Vic Toews, asking him to intervene. But Toews said he couldn't interfere with a federal decision.

Martin said he couldn't believe the government doesn't have a "made in Canada" procurement policy for defense contracts, particularly given the billions of dollars in spending that have been

promised over the next few years.

"We're sending the message that if you want a good bus for your country's armed forces, do what we do, buy German," Martin was quoted as saying.

A Winnipeg newspaper reported that workers at the MCI plant also were furious with the government's decision, especially after they learned the difference in bid prices was less than \$2,000 each on buses that are costing the government roughly \$467,000 (Canadian).

"Our concern is that the feds should be buying Canadian, especially when we're talking about a minimal difference between these two bids," said Brian Short, spokesman for Local 1953 of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers.

MCI reportedly was told the difference between the two bids was \$60,000 on a contract with a value of \$14 million. MCI has indi-

cated it may appeal the decision, and Short says the union wants to help with any appeal.

The contract was awarded by the Canadian Ministry of Public Works and Government Services. A spokeswoman was quoted as saying the government's Canadian content policy applies only when there are three qualified Canadian bidders. In this case, only two bidders had manufacturing plants in Canada, MCI and Quebec-based Prevost Car, so the bidding was opened up.

The Canadian Department of Defense already operates 13 MCI J-model coaches to transport Canadian soldiers.

MCI noted the department will now have to buy parts and supply technical and maintenance support for another brand of vehicle, and will lose the tax dollars and related spending on Canadian supplies for the new coaches.

Anniversary is marked for start up of Setra assistance network

GREENSBORO, N.C. — One year ago, DaimlerChrysler Commercial Buses North America opened a technical call center here and today both customers and company executives are calling the operation a success.

The call center, part of DaimlerChrysler's Customer Assistance

Network, known as CAN, provides around-the-clock assistance for a range of DaimlerChrysler commercial buses, including Setra motorcoaches and Sprinter shuttles.

"Everyone with the Setra CAN program has just been great to us," said John Cauley, Jr. of Jean's Bus Service in Greenville, S.C. "We

are relatively new to the Setra line and any time we have had a question or concern about anything, the technical advisers have been quick to respond and get us back on track."

The call center is staffed from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Eastern) by factory trained personnel. After-hours op-

tions also are available, making the service a 24-hour operation.

The DaimlerChrysler advisers staffing the center can provide technical assistance; supply service location information, including scheduling; request delivery of emergency parts, or schedule a personal visit by one of DCCBNA's

field technical advisers.

"This call center has proven a more convenient, centralized function to assist with quicker responses to technical issues," said Patrick Scully, chief commercial officer for DCCBNA.

The center can be reached by calling (800) 882-8054.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

FOR SALE



Riley Bus Service Inc
1-800-288-8246

1994 MCI D3
Series 60, 47 pass national, Extra AC, new brakes
Call for specs.
\$40,000

1999 MCI 102E
54 pass, B500, C12 Cat, Excellent Cond.
\$155,000 / obo

TWO MCI E SERIES COACHES



Both are 54 passenger with Series 60, B500, retarder, DVD/VCP 6-monitor video, aluminum wheels, lavatory with holding tank, enclosed parcel racks, cup holders,

magazine nets, window shades, card table, 110 volt A/C battery charger, new turbo, new fan clutch, new bushings, new alternators
2000 102EL3 – 460,000 miles, \$229,000
2001 E4500 – 400,000 miles, \$239,000

Call Dale at 800-499-5765 or email dale@executivecoach.net

FOR SALE



3 – 1997 Dina Viaggio 1000s
52 PAX + 1 Escort Seat
\$50,000 each, includes tires
2 – 1999 VanHool T-945s
57 PAX + 1 Escort Seat
\$115,000 each, including tires

Call Joe @ 508-993-4503 or e-mail joe@amaralcompanies.com

3 - 2000 MCI E Coaches Available



New paint, Allison trans., 12.7 Detroit, 56 pax, alloy rims, Espar heater, 6 monitors, new rubber, A/C, toilet, power blinds, 330K – 440K miles.

DOT inspected and ready to work. Clean coaches, good miles, well maintained. Asking \$180,000
Brian or Wally at 507-583-4585 or 507-456-5310 (cell)
-Financing Available-

Union Station in D.C. has parking

WASHINGTON — Historic Union Station, the most-visited destination in the nation's capital, is promoting the availability of motorcoach parking.

The parking garage attached to the station has 90 bus spaces available daily on a first-come, first-service basis. The parking is available around the clock each day.

The parking facility's overhead clearance is 12-feet, 7-inches.

Access to the parking is available from Massachusetts Avenue, NE, from a ramp on the eastside of Union Station and from H Street, NE.

The daily parking rates, which do not include in-and-out privileges, are:

- 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. — \$20
- 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. — \$10

Union Station was redeveloped nearly 20 years ago as a retail center and intermodal transportation facility. There are more than 100 shops and restaurants, including a food court.

For information and policies, call USPGC LLC at (202) 898-1950.

Setra - a Brand of DaimlerChrysler

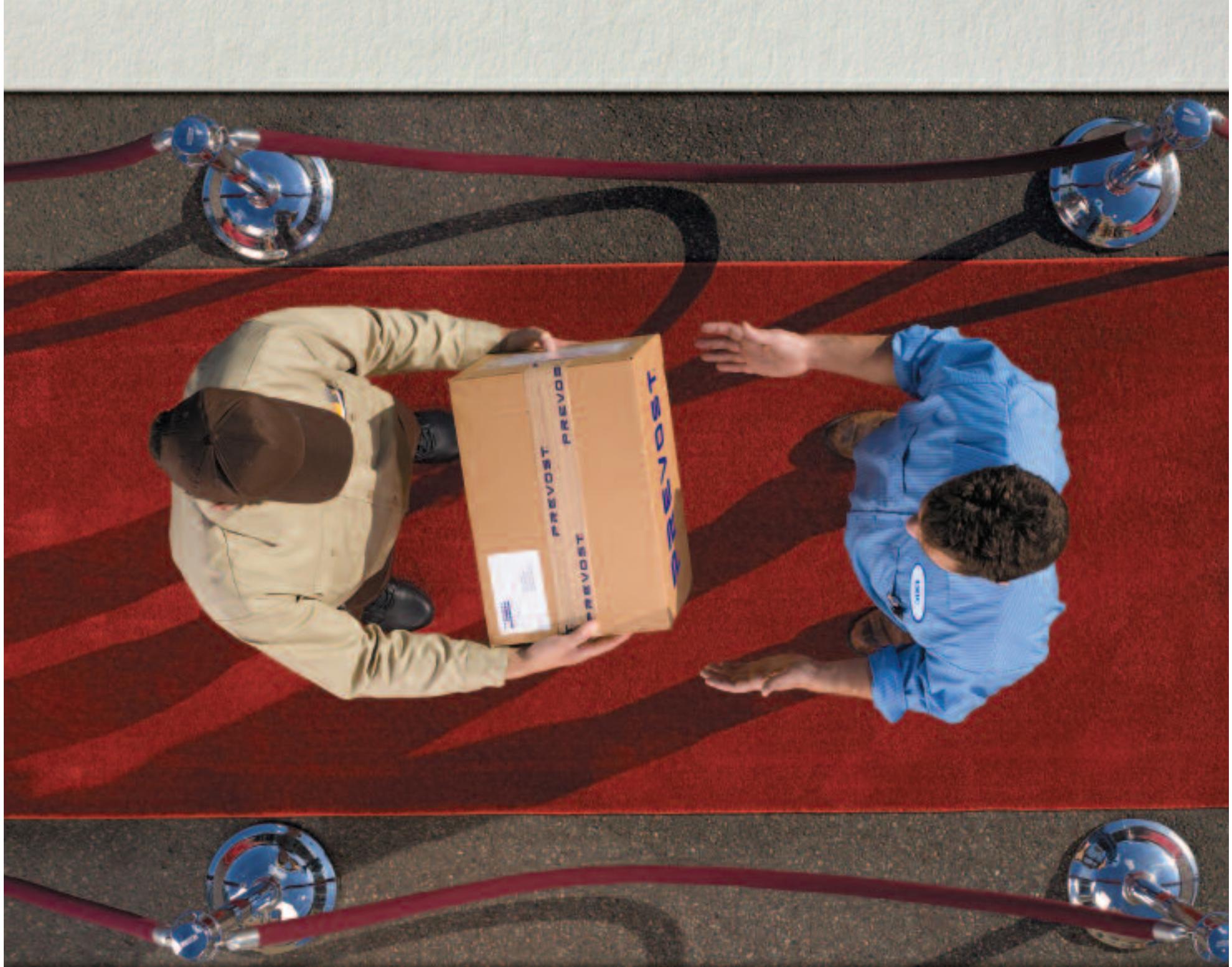
The benchmark
in luxury coaches



- Exciting, distinctive European design
- Unrivalled passenger comfort
- Outstanding driveability and maneuverability
- Finely tuned functionality
- Easy-to-service components of the highest quality
- A state-of-the-art safety package
- Backed by DaimlerChrysler

Setra of North America, Inc.
6012-B High Point Road
Greensboro, NC 27407
Toll free: 1.800.882.8054
email: sales@DCBUSNA.com
www.setra-coaches.com

SETRA
LUXURY COACHES



WE GO TO GREAT LENGTHS SO YOU CAN GO THE DISTANCE.

Not only do we take care of your parts needs, we take care of you.

We understand what it takes to run a smooth operation. That's why you depend on us. The Prevost Parts network, spanning all of North America, includes seven strategically located parts centers. Each center is staffed with a highly trained team of professionals ready to

assist you with all your parts needs. We know how important it is to get back on the road. It's our policy to make that happen without delay. We call it the Red Carpet Policy: Part corporate policy, part constant reminder that someone is always looking out for you.

To learn more please visit prevostcar.com. **THE ULTIMATE CLASS**



The Prevost 24/7 Commitment:
24/7 Technical Advice
24/7 Emergency Parts Ordering and Shipping
24/7 Online Access To Parts Ordering

Parts Customer Service: United States 1 800 621-5519 & 1 877 999-8808
Canada 1 800 463-8876 • Online Ordering: www.prevostcar.com

©2007 PREVOST CAR, INC.

PREVOST.