

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

Industry worries about altering diabetic-driver rules

WASHINGTON — The motorcoach industry doesn't think it would be a good idea to liberalize federal rules covering drivers with insulin-treated diabetes.

In fact, both the United Motorcoach and the American Bus associations do not think insulin-dependent diabetics should be permitted to drive long-haul bus routes and charter service.

Earlier this summer, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration published a request for comments on a proposed rulemaking to "amend its medical qualifications standards to allow the operation of commercial motor vehicles in interstate commerce by drivers with insulin-treated diabetes mellitus (ITDM)."

The request generated a consid-

NEWS ANALYSIS

erable amount of commentary. The response from the motorcoach industry and several highway safety groups was not enthusiastic about making changes.

The current system is a cumbersome process in which an applicant must apply for an exemption by providing medical and personal

information to the FMCSA. If qualified, the applicant's request is then published in the Federal Register along with a request for comments. If few objections are noted, the driver is issued a certificate that states the conditions under which he or she may drive.

The FMCSA is considering abandoning the case-by-case exemption process for a standard by

which a qualified medical examiner reviews the driver's application, makes a decision on whether or not the driver is qualified to drive in interstate commerce, and issues a certificate to that effect.

This proposed change is in response to the federal highway and public transportation law adopted by Congress a year ago

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New coach sales climb 11% in second quarter

Second-quarter sales of new motorcoaches in the U.S. and Canada, boosted in part by stronger sales in Canada, were 11.3 percent higher this year than during the same three months last year, *National Bus Trader* magazine reports.

Coach manufacturers sold a total of 593 new over-the-road buses during the quarter ended June 30, up from 533 units during the same period a year ago.

Compared to the second quarter of 2004, when 481 new coaches were sold, coach sales in the second three months of this year were up 23 percent. In the first quarter of this year, 490 new coaches were sold.

The second quarter is tradition-

ally the second-best sales period for new coach sales in North America. The final quarter of the year is typically the best sales quarter of the year.

As happened in the first quarter, four models from three manufacturers dominated sales during the second quarter. However, two models swapped places. The MCI J4500 and D4500 models were again the top sellers, but the Van Hool 2045 climbed to No. 3, moving ahead of No. 4 Prevost H3-45.

The fifth best-selling coach during the second quarter was the MCI D4505; No. 6 was the Setra S 417; and making its first appearance on the *National Bus Trader* Hit Parade of top selling seated



Prevost's new X3-45 made the best-seller list for the first time.

coaches was the Prevost X3-45.

Operators continued to diversify their coach buying during the second quarter. As recently as the first quarter of last year, the three best-selling coaches captured 80 percent of the market. In the second quarter of this year, that percentage dropped to 60 percent, meaning the remaining 40 percent was shared by 10 other coach models.

The percentage of new coaches bought by Canadians grew significantly during the second quarter, with 15.5 percent of the total purchased by northland operators. That compares with 6.7 percent in the first quarter of this year, and 10.5 percent during the second quarter of last year. *National Bus Trader* Editor Larry Plachno said it

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John Hill gets top bus / truck safety position

WASHINGTON — John H. Hill, who was nominated in May to be administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, has finally gotten the job.

Hill's appointment by President George Bush was approved by the U.S. Senate in one of its final acts before adjourning earlier this month for its summer recess.

"John Hill possesses decades of experience in law enforcement and commercial motor vehicle safety," said acting Secretary of Transportation Maria Cino.

"We appreciate that the Senate made it a priority to confirm John before their recess and I know he will be an exceptional FMCSA administrator."

Hill previously was chief safety officer and assistant administrator at the FMCSA, the federal bureaucracy that regulates over-the-road bus and truck safety.

Hill succeeds Annette Sandberg who resigned in February and left the agency in early April. Deputy Administrator David Hugel has been serving as acting administrator for the past two months.

Prior to his arrival at FMCSA,

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Idling restrictions grow; operators warned

WASHINGTON — The United Motorcoach Association is urging coach operators to be aware of the rapid spread of anti-idling laws across the U.S. and their oft-times tough penalties.

UMA Vice President for Industry Relations Ken Presley says operators should now assume there are anti-idling regulations in most cities and/or states they travel

to or through.

That being the case, notes Presley, operators should take steps to assure that both drivers and passengers are aware of the idling restrictions.

Passengers need to know, according to Presley, because of the possibility they will be inconvenienced if their coach is unable to idle long enough to maintain a

comfortable temperature at all times.

At least 31 states and/or cities have adopted idling restrictions and that number will likely increase rapidly, says Presley.

"Fines can range anywhere from \$50 to \$4,000, and at least five cities have laws that include imprisonment — Denver and Aspen, Colo.; Minneapolis; St.

Louis and Salt Lake City.

"Washington, D.C., a popular destination for motorcoach groups, restricts motorcoach operators to idling no more than three minutes unless the ambient temperature is below 32 degrees, at which time a maximum of five minutes idling is permissible," Presley notes.

Along with the local police, the

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UMA adds volunteer project to Motorcoach Expo agenda

NEW ORLEANS — The United Motorcoach Association is inviting individuals who are planning to attend Motorcoach Expo 2007 to participate in a “rewarding volunteer opportunity” with the New Orleans chapter of Habitat for Humanity.

Expo attendees will be able to donate time to a Habitat project on Tuesday, Jan. 16, the day before the official start of the trade show.

“While details of the project are still being negotiated, we are encouraging all UMA members and Expo attendees to consider donating their time for this event before Expo,” said Joan Libby, UMA board member and owner of Cavalier Coach in Boston. “Not only is it a great thing to do for New Orleans, it’s bound to be a lot of fun as well.”

While the Habitat project will be conducted at the same time as Expo’s popular Ray Dupuis Memorial Golf Tournament, golfers need not feel guilty about not being involved in the volunteer project, said Libby. As golfers

sign up and pay for the golf tournament, they will have an opportunity to donate directly to Habitat for Humanity.

To register for the golf tournament and/or to donate to Habitat for Humanity, go to www.motorcoachexpo.com.

The special “Habitat for Humanity Volunteer Project” section of the Motorcoach Expo Web site has additional information, including guidelines for volunteering.

“This is a great opportunity for Expo attendees to give back to a community that has given so much to us in the past,” said Libby.

“Many of our members were involved in extending a helping hand after (Hurricane) Katrina struck and we’re happy to try to be of assistance to the city of New Orleans in any way we can,” she noted.

For additional information, or to sign up for the project, contact UMA staff member Eric Morales at (800) 424-8262, or e-mail emorales@uma.org.

Golf Anyone?

Tournaments foster charter rules fights

ARLINGTON, Va. — When the Charter Bus Negotiated Rule-making Advisory Committee resumes its talks next month, one of the thorniest issues it will tackle is whether public transit agencies should be allowed to provide charter bus service for major sporting events, from big-time golf tournaments, to professional and college football games.

During the past half-dozen years, golf tournaments conducted in communities across the U.S. under the aegis of the Professional Golfers Association and the Ladies Professional Golf Association have become frequent battlegrounds between private bus operators and public transit agencies.

In many cases, the two golf associations have fomented the fight by insisting that communities hosting their tournaments provide shuttle bus service for the thousands of people who attend the events.

The associations often find that city fathers, local business groups and transit managers are

only too willing to volunteer the public transit agency for the shuttle service at little or no cost to the golf associations, tournament sponsors or host golf courses.

The transit agency brazenly attempted to disguise the charter.

But beyond the obvious economic benefit, the golf associations and tournament organizers also like working with transit agencies because they often have more of the type of buses the golf groups want, including smaller buses that can negotiate narrow golf course roadways and the sometimes restricted spaces around clubhouses and other drop-off points.

One of the latest skirmishes in the battle came in early June at the Barclays Classic golf tournament at the famed Westchester Country Club in Rye, N.Y.

Service Tours, a charter opera-

tor based in Yonkers, N.Y., provided shuttle service for the five days leading up to the tournament’s climax over the weekend of June 10 and 11. But for the tournament’s two biggest days, Service Tours was replaced by an area transit agency, The Bee-Line System of Mount Vernon, N.Y.

The president of Service Tours, Sal DiPaolo, lodged a complaint with the regional office of the Federal Transit Administration, saying The Bee-Line System violated federal rules by providing charter service for the tournament.

Lawrence Salley, the commissioner of transportation for Westchester County, which operates The Bee-Line System, denies the allegation, saying the service was “operated in strict compliance with the regulation.” Additionally, Salley denies The Bee-Line System displaced any other operator during the tournament. DiPaolo states flatly that his company was displaced.

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Look Out! Danger in Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Driving in metro Birmingham occasionally presents an unusual challenge: Giant coils of steel tumbling onto the highway.

The Birmingham News reports that in the past 18 years, at least 23 steel coils have become dislodged from flatbed trucks on interstates around the city. Birmingham is a major steel center.

In June, during an inspection, about a third of the 132 steel coil loads reviewed by state inspectors had "securement issues," Capt.

Harry Kearley of the Alabama Department of Public Safety told the newspaper.

State, steel and trucking executives met this summer to discuss legislation that would address the issue. One proposal was to fine truck drivers \$1,000, or take away their commercial driver license, if they lose their load on the road.

In addition to fines and CDL revocations, officials also discussed reducing speed limits on some interstates and fining trucking companies \$10,000 for each lost load.

Tenn. toughens 'move-over' law

NASHVILLE, Ten. — Drivers who fail to make room on state roads for emergency vehicles and law enforcement now face fines as high as \$500.

Specifically, drivers caught violating Tennessee's newly toughened "move over" law face fines of between \$100 and \$500, up from \$50, and up to 30 days in jail.

Like move-over laws in other states, Tennessee's version requires drivers to move over a lane if there are police, emergency or service

vehicles on the shoulder of the road. If drivers cannot safely move over, they are required to slow down until they pass the site.

It applies to stopped law enforcement vehicles, fire trucks, tow trucks, state HELP trucks and vehicles belonging to companies contracted by state or local government.

Since the law was first enacted two years ago, Tennessee Highway Patrol personnel have ticketed about 2,000 drivers.

Nevada coach operators gearing up for new battle with state regulators

RENO, Nev. — Motorcoach operators in Nevada are powering up for another face-off with state regulators, and this time they appear to have some help from a number of state legislators.

The Nevada Transportation Coalition has been the catalyst for at least six pieces of legislation — targeted against the state Transportation Services Authority — that are expected to be introduced in the state legislature when it opens its 2007 session in February.

All six measures — including two that would abolish the TSA and transfer some of its duties to other state agencies — have been placed on the "bill draft request" list by state senators, the first formal step in getting proposed legislation before the state senate and assembly.

"We're in for another good fight this year," said Bob Fairman, owner of No Stress Express in Carson City and president of the coalition, which represents both the motorcoach and taxi industries in the state.

He said he has worked closely the past several months with a number of lawmakers who have

shown an interest in helping motorcoach and taxi businesses in their long-running feud with the TSA. Most notable among them are Republican Senators Maurice Washington, Dennis Nolan and Bob Beers and Democratic Assemblywoman Barbara Buckley.

The feud centers on claims by the coalition that the TSA has been acting unconstitutionally by regulating the transportation industry beyond federal laws that preempt state authority.

The latest effort to take on the TSA comes about six weeks after a federal court in Nevada tossed out a lawsuit the coalition and the Nevada Motor Carriers Association, which represents the trucking industry, filed against the regulatory agency. The court ruled the TSA is protected from such suits under the U.S. Constitution.

The two trade groups filed the suit last year after first failing to get the state legislature to either limit the TSA's regulatory authority or abolish the agency. Lawmakers put together four separate measures to address the issue, two of which passed and two of which died in committees.

Of the measures that passed, one had been reworked so drastically that it ended up giving the TSA additional regulatory authority and fell out of favor of the coalition. That proposal originally would have required the TSA to become consistent with federal preemption laws.

The other, which would have eliminated the TSA and assigned its duties to other state agencies, was vetoed by Gov. Kenny C. Guinn because it contained a last-minute amendment that would have hurt the taxi industry. The governor said at the time he would have signed the legislation had it not been for the added language that would have prevented taxi drivers from accepting tips from nightclub owners for taking passengers to their businesses.

Fairman said he's looking for better results from lawmakers this year, possibly because they are beginning to hear from more motorcoach and taxi owners and their customers. "When we get a complaint now, we tell the people to contact their state senator or assembly member," he added.

If lawmakers either trim back some of the TSA's authority or do away with the agency all together, it would not only help bus companies in Nevada, but charter operators from outside the state as well, some of whom have been leery about coming to the state because of the TSA regulatory arm, says Fairman. "It would open up more charter work for everybody," he contends.

He urges other carriers to join in the fight against the TSA by supporting and contributing to the coalition.

Meantime, Fairman said he has run into additional problems with the TSA that could lead to a state investigation of the agency. He said his motorcoach company recently passed an on-site state inspection, but was told some time later that he actually had failed.

"The inspector told me that I had passed and I believe they changed his documents after they were sent to Las Vegas," he maintained.

Fairman said he complained to a state lawmaker about the issue and the lawmaker wrote the Nevada Attorney General's Office requesting that the incident be investigated.

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Speed limits for buses, cars increase in metro Detroit

DETROIT — Speed limits for motorcoaches and autos on four metro Detroit freeways are going up — to 70 miles per hour in most cases, the state maximum for passenger vehicles.

Some freeway segments around Detroit have 70-mph limits now, but the new increases mark a significant expansion of speeds on

area highways.

The first section to get the higher speed limit is Interstate 75 from Outer Drive in Detroit to Pennsylvania Road in Taylor, which previously had a maximum speed of 65 mph.

Two more freeway segments also are scheduled to get speed-limit changes. State route M-59

from Opdyke in Pontiac to east of Mound near Utica will go to 70, while the Van Dyke Expressway in Macomb County will go to 65 mph from 55, except for areas near Romeo where the highway intersects with nonfreeway cross streets. There the speed limit will remain 55.

Before the end of summer, I-

696 will go to 70 mph from end to end, provided the Michigan Department of Transportation finds no structural or design concerns that would make faster travel unsafe.

All of the new limits become effective after updated speed limit signs are installed.

Limits for over-the-road trucks

are not being changed; they remain 60 mph.

The changes resulted from studies by the Michigan State Police that concluded some speed limits were too low. The State Police has adopted a plan to post speed limits that more accurately reflect the flow of traffic in the affected areas.

Transits seek charter firms

The following public transit providers have informed the United Motorcoach Association of their intent to provide charter bus service unless willing and able private operators step forward to offer service.

UMA urges appropriate operators to take the time to respond to these notices:

Muskogee County, Okla. Deadline: Aug. 22, 2006. Write to: Muskogee County Commissioners, Muskogee County Transit, Attn.: Norma Wilbourn, Transit Director, 1320 N. Mill #126, Muskogee, OK 74401

Franklin, Tenn. Deadline: Aug. 23, 2006. Write to: Contract Department, Franklin Transit Authority, 108 Fourth Ave. South, Ste. 209, Franklin, TN 37064. Phone: (615) 790-0604.

Cumberland and Dauphin counties, Pa. Deadline: Aug. 24, 2006. Write to: James H. Hoffer, Executive Director, Cumberland-Dauphin-Harrison Transit Authority, P.O. Box 1571, Harrisburg, PA 17105. Phone: (717) 233-5657 Ext. 113.

Norwalk, Conn. Deadline: Aug. 25, 2006. Write to: Louis Schulman, Administrator, Norwalk Transit District, 275 Wilson Ave., Norwalk, CN 06854. Phone: (203) 852-0000.

Lycoming County, Pa. Deadline: Aug. 29, 2006. Write to: William E. Nichols Jr., General Manager, River Valley Transit, 1500 W. Third St., Williamsport, PA 17701. Phone: (570) 326-2500.

Biodiesel gets state tax break

LANSING, Mich. — Gov. Jennifer Granholm has signed legislation lowering the state tax on biodiesel to 12 cents from 15 cents a gallon, and the tax on ethanol blends to 12 cents from 19 cents.

Granholm also signed a bill that offers grants to service stations that sell biodiesel and ethanol-blended fuel.

Ethanol is a gasoline additive made primarily from corn. Biodiesel is a fuel made in from renewable sources such as soybean oil.



Bus Evacuation Services

Federal Bus and Driver Contracting Opportunities

Coach America (CA) is soliciting all qualified U.S. bus operators to provide intercity motor coaches and qualified drivers for evacuation services through July of 2007. CA has recently been awarded the DOT contract to provide federal bus evacuation services to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). While services could be required throughout the continental U.S. over the next twelve months, the majority of anticipated demand will occur between June and November in Louisiana and the Gulf Coast region. CA will perform under the direction of the DOT and will directly contract with equipment owners and operators. Up to 1500 buses and 2000-3000 drivers may be needed for major events, but 30-40 smaller events are anticipated over the period. Field support staff personnel (1000+ in major events) are also needed for dispatching, passenger loading and management and equipment support.

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Evacuation.Info@CoachAmerica.com

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The operation will utilize 40-45' coaches with at least 47 seats and automatic transmission. Coaches must meet all Federal safety and operating requirements and the operator must have current proof of minimum insurance.

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Operators will contract to provide a minimum number of buses and a minimum number of drivers for specific periods of time. Operators will also commit to minimum "report to check-in location" times (e.g., 24 hours from email/ voice notification) for their equipment and drivers. Individual agreements will be negotiated separately with the Carrier Relations staff at CA as soon as possible, beginning July 24, 2006. Detailed information will be posted on the CoachAmerica.com website as it becomes available.

Ford recalls trucks, vans for potential fire hazard

WASHINGTON — Ford Motor Co. has recalled 1.2 million trucks, vans and sport utility vehicles because of concern about potential electrical fires.

The recall includes models that are used for cutaway buses and vans that are used for commercial passenger service.

Specifically, the recall, one of the largest ever, is tied to the

cruise control deactivation switch system, which could corrode, overheat and catch fire.

The recall involves trucks fueled by gasoline or natural gas and equipped with cruise controls, including 1994-2002 F-550, F-450, F350 and F-250 Super Duty trucks; 1994-1996 Econoline vans; 1996-2002 E-450 vans, plus 2000-2002 Ford Excursion SUVs

and 1998 Ford Explorers and Mercury Mountaineers.

The recall does not involve similar trucks and vans fueled by diesel.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said earlier this month it closed a nearly two-year investigation into the cause of the fires.

The agency has received 1,472

complaints connected to the problems, including 65 reports of fires.

Ford said last year it had found that brake fluid could leak through the cruise control's deactivation switch into the system's electrical components, leading to corrosion. That could lead to a buildup of electrical current that could cause overheating and a fire.

Dealers will install a fused wiring harness to the cruise control deactivation switch to prevent the risk of fire if brake fluid leaked into the switch.

NHTSA said there have been no confirmed deaths or injuries, but lawsuits have been filed over three deaths in Iowa, Georgia and Arkansas, allegedly connected to vehicle fires.

Axes finally get axed in Ontario

TORONTO — The Ontario Motor Coach Association says it has been notified by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation that fire axes are no longer required on any bus in Ontario.

Twenty years ago, Ontario removed the requirement contained in the Public Vehicle Act that buses had to have fire axes. However, there was another regulation requiring that a fire axe be carried on any bus transporting school groups and coaches equipped with wheelchair lifts. That rule was not changed.

Brian Crow, OMCA president, said that several operator members reported receiving warnings and defect reports this spring and summer for not having axes on their coaches operating in Ontario. "We learned that Ontario bus inspectors stepped up enforcement of this old law," said Crow.

OMCA went to the Ontario government and argued that the province should drop its outdated axe requirement for all coaches.

"The ministry listened to us and were persuaded by our arguments and have notified us that fire axes are no longer required in any bus in Ontario," Crow said, adding that the association appreciated the "quick action."

John Hill

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Hill was a member of the Indiana State Police from 1974-2003, where he served as the commercial vehicle enforcement division commander from 1989 to 1994 and from 2000 to 2003.

He also commanded the Indiana State Police field enforcement and logistics divisions.

Hill becomes the third full-time administrator of FMCSA since it was formed six years ago.

The United Motorcoach Association was among those organizations congratulating Hill on his confirmation and taking over the job. "We look forward to his tenure," said the association in a statement.

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Diabetes

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

that mandates that FMCSA not set a higher standard for drivers with insulin-treated diabetes mellitus than others are asked to meet. And it requires the agency to investigate ways in which some drivers can safely qualify.

In response to the Congressional mandate, the FMCSA has already dropped the previous three-year commercial driving requirement for the exemption and instituted a minimum time period for insulin use prior to applying for an exemption.

Questions, questions

Among the questions being considered by the FMCSA are: Who should make the certification decision? What should the standard be for granting a driver with insulin-treated diabetes mellitus the right to drive in interstate commerce? For how long should the certificate be issued? Who is responsible for reporting a change in medical condition? And, are there certain segments of the industry that should not be included in the certification (long-haul drivers, for example)?

Those who support removal of the exemption clause include the American Diabetes Association, the Owner-Operator Independent

Drivers Association (a trucking group), and a number of affected drivers.

They argue that many people are able to successfully control their diabetes with insulin. OOIDA claims there is nothing in the job of an over-the-road-trucker that makes it more difficult than other occupations as far as diabetes is concerned; that the current exemption clause prevents those who successfully control the disease from applying, and there are drivers currently in interstate commerce who are hiding their conditions so as not to give up their livelihoods.

The main issue for those who are concerned about the proposed changes is hypoglycemia, a drop in blood sugar that can lead to unconsciousness or to a change in mental status. While there are many diabetic commercial drivers, only those who can control the disease with diet and/or oral medication are allowed to drive in interstate commerce without an exemption.

Although diabetes may slowly impact other physical conditions that can bar a driver (high blood pressure, vision problems, loss of feeling in hands and feet, for example), it is hypoglycemia that can come on rapidly, with no warning signs. Those who control their diabetes with insulin must pay very close attention to their blood sugar levels and maintain a steady life-

style that includes regular meals, regular sleep and regular exercise. This is good advice for anybody but for those who must prevent hypoglycemic reactions, it is critical.

Look to FAA

Both ABA and UMA in their comments recommend that the FMCSA consider the qualifications set down by the FAA for certifying pilots who use insulin.

'Allowing insulin-dependent drivers to operate commercial motor vehicles creates an unacceptable risk to other road users.'

Although there are no pilots with insulin-treated diabetes mellitus flying commercially, licenses can be granted for personal use. The FAA qualifications include requiring that an applicant should have no recurrent (two or more) hypoglycemic reactions, within the past five years, that

- Result in a loss of consciousness or seizure,
- Require intervention by another party,
- Result in impaired cognitive function.

This standard would also require that a driver be recertified every three months. The decision on whether or not a driver can be certified should be by an endocrinologist with expertise in occupational medicine rather than the driver's personal physician, although the driver's physician should be consulted.

The National Transportation Safety Board points out that in the 10 years since the FAA program became available only 460 such exemptions for pilots with insulin-treated diabetes mellitus have been granted. The NTSB also cites conflicting results in studies of insulin-using drivers and the fact there is very little data about drivers with insulin-treated diabetes mellitus in interstate commercial driving.

Strong opposition

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety is adamant in its opposition not only to the removal of the exemptions but in the FMCSA granting interstate privileges to any drivers with insulin-treated diabetes mellitus.

"Allowing insulin-dependent drivers to operate commercial motor vehicles creates an unacceptable risk to other road users," said the institute, which represents insurance companies.

However, since Congress has mandated that FMCSA allow at

least some drivers with insulin-treated diabetes mellitus, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety believes that the requirements should be as rigorous as possible.

In its comments, UMA emphasized "that operating charter, tour and scheduled-service motorcoaches creates exceptionally elevated (and often underestimated) physical and cognitive demands. Drivers are often challenged with long distances, long hours, erratic schedules, away from home extensively, and the additional component of dealing with passenger needs and desires."

ABA also expressed doubts about the demands of the lifestyle on a driver with insulin-treated diabetes mellitus.

In comments that were supported by letters from Greyhound Lines and Coach America, ABA said that "changes in the medical certification program for insulin-treated diabetes mellitus' individuals should not be available for those who would serve as drivers for over-the-road buses engaged in long-haul schedule service or operations involving charter and tour groups."

Both organizations stressed the fact that it is not just the driver who must be considered but the 55 passengers who may be on board at the same time.

Charter rules

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

DiPaolo also accuses Salley of failing to determine if there were "willing-and-able" private operators available to provide the service, and says Salley brazenly attempted to disguise the charter.

In his complaint, DiPaolo asks the FTA to join him in requesting that the U.S. Department of Justice

"investigate and adjudicate" his allegations and what he calls "grievous violations."

Meanwhile, at the opposite end of the country, the public transit agency in Concord, Calif., has filed a notice that it intends to provide charter service for an LPGA tournament next month in nearby Alamo, Calif., unless willing-and-able private operators step forward to provide the service.

The tournament will be Sept. 18-24 at the Blackhawk Country Club Golf Course in Alamo, and the transit agency, Central Contra Costa Transit Authority, says that up to 10 40-foot buses will be needed to provide the mile-and-a-half shuttle service on a daily basis.

Operators interested in being considered for the service should write to: Rick Ramacier, General

Manager, Central Contra Costa Transit Authority, 2477 Arnold Industrial Way, Concord, CA 94520. The deadline is Aug. 17. For more information, call (925) 676-1976.

Charter service by transit agencies for golf tournaments and other sporting events will likely be one of the toughest issues to be faced by the Charter Bus Negotiated Rulemaking Advisory Com-

mittee, which was created this past spring to come up with recommendations for overhauling the federal charter rules. The committee was called for in the federal highway and public transit legislation adopted by Congress one year ago this month.

The committee has met three times, in May, June and last month, and its next meeting is here in mid-September.

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Upgraded Van Hool C2045E integrates added features

WINTER GARDEN, Fla. — The first of the 2007-model motorcoaches has debuted with the unveiling of the Van Hool C2045E.

Since Van Hool began exporting the C2000 series to the U.S. six years ago, the coach has been one of the nation's best selling models. In the second quarter of this year, it was the third-most-popular new coach. (See article on Page 1.)

The latest version, the C2045E, has a slew of new features, including important interior upgrades, exterior styling enhancements and other improvements designed to meet the changing needs of American operators, says Van Hool's U.S. distributor, ABC Companies.

Van Hool has added 19 upgrades to C2045E, leading off with a restyled passenger-friendly stairwell that's designed to improve safety and facilitate easier loading and unloading via white-nosed rubber treads, new handrail and directionally-curved dash.

The driver's area features a streamlined and more functional dashboard and instrument panel. Rounded parcel rack doors along with a rounded restroom door and walls highlight changes to the cabin. A new color palette also is

available for the 2007 coach.

The technical upgrades to the C2045E exterior include:

- Newly designed head light doors that borrow the radical wedge design head light doors from the Van Hool transit bus line. The hinged door incorporates the turn signals, as well as the high- and low-projector-beam headlights, allowing for easy bulb replacements.
- Improved front-side styling
- Redesigned front-wheel fenders
- LED side-turn signals
- Side-turn lights

The side letter-board panels have been restyled, providing a full-length sweep that flows from the

head-light doors along the side of the coach.

The LED side-turn signals enhance the side views of the coach, while providing for smaller fixtures and the reliability of LED lighting. The rear-side turn signal fixtures near the drive wheels have been relocated to a new position between the two axles for driver convenience and visibility while making tight turns.

The side-turn lights have new oval fixtures. As a driver convenience, all four white side lights turn on when the coach is put into reverse, allowing the driver full length illumination for better nighttime visibility.

ABC events will unveil newest models

FARIBAULT, Minn. — ABC Companies is sponsoring what it calls an "unveiling celebration" next week to mark the introduction of updated versions of two buses it markets.

The two-day customer event marks the launch of the Van Hool C2045E coach and the ABC M1235 midsize bus.

ABC Sales locations across the U.S. are participating in the intro-

duction, offering customers and prospective buyers an opportunity to inspect and test-drive the new models. There also will be food and giveaways at the tailgate-themed event.

ABC executives, as well as representatives from Caterpillar, will be available to answer questions and provide information during the event on Aug. 21 and 22.

"We are extremely excited about these new models," said Dane



The enhanced Van Hool C2045E features an easy access stairwell.

There also is a new:

- Rear cap, featuring styling lines and an inset for an optional rear window
- LED high-mount stop lights
- Engine door

Besides the new driver area and dashboard and improved stepwell,

the revamped interior includes new:

- Steering wheel and column
- HVAC multiplex controls
- Parcel rack design
- Rounded restroom door

The design changes made to the instrument panel and dashboard allow easier access for maintenance. Switch layouts also have been grouped by function. Lighting, HVAC, and mechanical functions are grouped in appropriate rows. The park brake valve has been relocated to the left side for greater safety.

A smaller steering wheel has been added, and a new steering column provides comfortable positioning for most any driver, says Van Hool.

The evaporator doors also have been restyled.

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Greyhound aids more runaway youth

CHICAGO — Free bus tickets for 235 runaway young people were issued by Greyhound Lines during the first half of this year, reports a national nonprofit organization that handles crisis calls from runaway and at-risk youth and their families.

The National Runaway Switchboard says it handled more than 8,500 calls during the first six months of 2006, a 13 percent increase from last year. The calls (incoming and outgoing) are from

runaway and at-risk youth, parents, relatives of runaways, teachers, social service agencies and law enforcement officers.

The National Runaway Switchboard's Home Free program helps runaway youth return home or to a safe destination. Greyhound is its principal transportation partner.

Of the 235 Greyhound tickets issued from January through June, 87 percent were for out-of-state destinations, 60 percent were for female travelers, and 36 percent

were for 17-year-olds.

Forty-eight percent of the youth who used the NRS Home Free program reported family dynamics as the top reason for leaving home.

The National Runaway Switchboard, established 35 years ago, serves as the federally designated communication system for homeless and runaway youth. It is supported by more than 150 volunteers

The organization's hotline is (800) RUNAWAY. Or, go to www.1800runaway.org.

Lunch meeting of Texas operators set

SAN ANTONIO — A group of Texas motorcoach operators who are organizing a quasi-state association under the umbrella of the Texas Travel Industry Association are planning a series of events to acquaint other operators with their concept.

The group has formed a Ground Transportation Council at the TTIA in an effort to provide a collective voice and function as a state-wide coalition for coach

operators operating in Texas.

The council had arranged a reception in June but a scheduling conflict forced a cancellation. Now, the first of a series of meetings will occur Aug. 29 in Houston.

Jerry Williams, president of Lone Star Trailways in Tyler, said the rescheduled meeting on the 29th will be a luncheon, with follow-up sessions in Dallas and San Antonio and possibly Austin.

The council is laying plans for

the state legislative session that begins in January, and it will brief operators at the luncheon on bills the council intends to support. Being part of the TTIA gives the council access to lobbyists and other groups.

Texas operators interested in attending the get-acquainted lunch at the end of the month should call Scott Owings of the TTIA at (512) 476-4472. Or, e-mail him at scotto@ttia.org.

Drivers beware: Thieves may want your GPS unit

Motorcoach drivers aren't the only segment of society that has become enamored of personal GPS devices.

The FBI reports that electronic gadgets like GPS units, BlackBerries and iPods also have become extremely popular with thieves. In fact, theft of small, expensive electronic devices from vehicles has climbed steadily in this decade.

The devices' popularity among thieves is attributed to the fact they are easy to remove, easy to carry, seemingly easy to sell, and are not programmed to operate only when installed in a specific vehicle (as many car audio/video systems are these days).

The June 1 issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News* reported that bus drivers in increasing numbers are purchasing GPS devices for long trips. The satellite-enabled devices, their acronym stands for global positioning system, can guide a driver right to a specific address.

The units being purchased by drivers typically start at around

\$500 and go up to \$800 and \$1,000.

While National Interstate Insurance has seen no trend in claims for GPS units stolen from motorcoaches, it is unlikely the devices would be covered under an operator's insurance anyway.

According to Michelle Silvestro, assistant vice president and national marketing manager at National Interstate, "the ISO form contains an exclusion for any electronic equipment that receives or transmits audio, visual or data signals and is not designed for the reproduction of sound. The GPS device clearly transmits data signals and would likely be excluded," she said.

Bill Roper at Rodes Roper Love Insurance Agency also cautions that its policies probably would not cover any equipment that was attached and not installed, regardless of whether it belonged to the driver or the operator.

So, drivers who are using GPS devices should take them along when they turn in at night.



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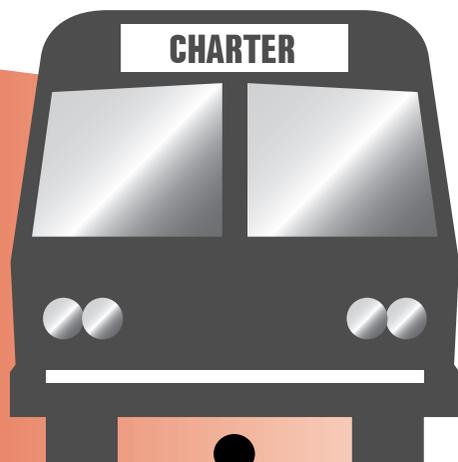
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People

Laidlaw International has announced that *Douglas Carty* is becoming president and CEO of the company's school bus unit, **Laidlaw Education Services**, and stepping down from his position as executive vice president and chief financial officer of Laidlaw Inter-

national.

Jeffrey Sanders is being promoted to vice president and chief financial officer from his current position as vice president of corporate development and controller.

Motor Coach Industries has named new managers at two of its service centers. *Gary Myers* has been chosen branch manager at the new service center in Lebanon,

Tenn., and *Tony LaCalamita* has become general manager of the Orlando service center.

LaCalamita formerly was executive director of customer service for MCI's Southeast region. Before that, he was an account executive for ABC Bus Inc. and prior to that vice president of sales and marketing at Glaval Bus, the midsize bus manufac-

turer.

He also held positions at Champion Motor Coach, another midsize bus producer.

Myers has an extensive maintenance background. He was at Penn Detroit Diesel in Philadelphia before joining MCI Fleet Support as a customer service manager at the Blackwood, N.J. service center.



Tony LaCalamita



Gary Myers

Calendar

AUGUST 2006

17-20 National Association of Motorcoach Operators Annual Conference, University of Maryland Marriott Inn and Conference Center, College Park. Info: Call (301) 568-3500 or (201) 319-8989.

20-24 Motorcoach Association of South Carolina Annual Meeting and Marketplace, Embassy Suites Airport Convention Center, Charleston, S.C. Info: Go to www.scmotorcoach.org.

27-Sept. 2 CVSA Brake Safety Awareness Week, across the U.S., Canada. Info: Contact Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, www.cvsa.org.

29-31 Florida Motorcoach Association 2006 Appointment Show, Renaissance Resort at World Golf Village, St. Augustine, Fla. Info: Go to www.floridamotorcoach.org.

SEPTEMBER 2006

1-3 Bus Bash 2006, Grand Rapids, Mich. Info: (815) 946-2341, or go to www.busmag.com.

Idling

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

district's anti-idling law also is strictly enforced by the air quality compliance and enforcement branch of the D.C. Department of the Environment.

"Any person or organization that owns and/or operates a vehicle in violation of the D.C. regulation will be issued a ticket for \$500," said Presley. "Once a person is convicted of violating the idling rule, the fine is doubled until the maximum penalty of \$4,000 is reached."

The American Transportation Research Institute, the trucking industry research arm, maintains a Web site of idling regulations. Go to www.atri-online.org/2005.ATRI.IdlingCompendium.pdf.

There was a time, not so long ago, says Presley, when the motorcoach industry often was praised for reducing the number of cars on the road and the attendant pollution. Anti-idling laws, however, have sullied the industry's "green" image.

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MCI doles out prizes for customer events

SCHAUMBURG, Ill. — Motor Coach Industries has announced the top winners of drawings it has conducted as part of major promotions it has been sponsoring in recent weeks.

Eastern Bus Co. of Union City, N.J., and Universal Coach Line Ltd. of Richmond, British Columbia, have been awarded certificates for 100,000 American Airline AAdvantage miles as part of the MCI Rewards Experience program.

With that program, MCI customers earn an entry for a monthly drawing to win American Airlines' miles for every \$1,000 spent on parts, service or new and used coaches. The monthly drawings end in January.

Now, MCI has launched a similar program for its branded Coach Guard parts. For each \$100 coach operators spend on Coach Guard parts, they earn an entry for a drawing for 100,000 AAdvantage miles. That offer applies to purchases made between July 1 and Sept. 30.

This past spring, MCI conducted what it called the Grand Tour, hosting open houses at its facilities

and those of customers across the U.S. and Canada. MCI entertained nearly 600 customers at the tour's 11 stops.

The three winners of the tour's grand prizes were: Oleta Coach Lines of Williamsburg, Va., winner of a complete set of Sardo seat covers; Dave's Tours in New Orleans, winner of a Turbo Images' graphics package, and Brewster Tours of Banff, Alberta, which won a REI 10.4-inch LCD six-monitor retrofit kit.

MCI held drawings at each location for other prizes, including free registration fees for Motorcoach Expo 2007 in New Orleans.

"Our Grand Tour event was one of biggest undertakings of the year," said Patricia Ziska, MCI vice president of corporate marketing and major accounts. "The Grand Tour provided a more social setting for our new and pre-owned sales representatives, while letting operators see for themselves the many improvements the company has made to its sales and service centers," said Ziska.

Co-sponsoring the tour were Caterpillar, REI, Turbo Images, ZF Industries, Amaya and Sardo.

Coach sales

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

was the best quarterly sales figure for Canada in years.

The ZF AS-Tronic transmission was installed in more than 57 percent of all seated coaches delivered to private operators during the second quarter.

However, the AS-Tronic's market share in the overall motorcoach sector is smaller because the ZF automatic stick-shift transmission is not available in the Setra S 417 and it is not spec'd for conversion

shells or those going to government agencies. ZF's share of the total coach market was 35.8 percent in the second quarter. That means the Allison B500 transmission retains 64.2 percent of the overall coach market.

The conversion sector continued to shrink. A total of 66 conversion shells were sold during the second quarter of this year, 11.1 percent of the market. That compares with 79 units sold in the second quarter last year and 87 units in the second quarter two years ago. The conversion shell market seems to be counter cyclical to the economy. When the overall economy is strong, conversion shell sales tend to slide.

Plachno, who compiles his magazine's sales report, noted that sales of "imported" coaches, meaning Van Hool and Setra combined, captured 23.6 percent of the market in the second quarter, up from a lackluster 16.9 percent in the first quarter of this year. A year ago, the two coach builders captured 20.1 percent of the total market.

Questions about *National Bus Trader's* quarterly and annual sales reports should be directed to Plachno at (815) 946-2341, or e-mail lplachno@busmag.com.

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Carmen Picknally of Peter Pan dies

EAST LONGMEADOW, Mass. — Carmen W. Picknally, the long-time maintenance chief of Peter Pan Trailways in Springfield, Mass., died earlier this month at the age of 80.

Mr. Picknally worked at Peter Pan for 60 years and for 40 years held the title of vice president. He retained the title of vice president emeritus at the time of his death.

He was a cousin of Peter L. Picknelly, who served as president and then chairman of Peter Pan from 1964 until his death two years ago. Peter Picknelly's father, Peter Carmen Picknelly, bought a limousine service in 1933 that

grew into Peter Pan Buslines/Peter Pan Trailways.

Carmen Picknally oversaw maintenance of the Peter Pan fleet as it expanded to hundreds of buses. The company history says that if Mr. Picknally ever suffered a cut he would bleed diesel fuel.

Mr. Picknally was a decorated Navy veteran, serving in the Pacific during World War II. He was a past commander of the American Legion post in East Longmeadow, his home for 49 years.

He also was a member of the Society of Automotive Engineers for more than 20 years and helped the World Bank in the early 1990s

evaluate the Russian bus industry after the Cold War.

Mr. Picknally's son, Thomas, is senior vice president-maintenance of Peter Pan Trailways.

Besides Thomas, Mr. Picknally is survived by another son, Carmen Jr., and two daughters, Elizabeth Cunningham and Nancy Cassista; a sister Jean Montana, and eight grandchildren.

There is a Picknally Family Scholarship memorial, in the name of Mr. Picknally's wife, Nancy, who died 10 years ago, at Cathedral High School, 260 Surrey Rd., Springfield, MA 01118.

America Charters co-founder dies

DALLAS, N.C. — William R. Rhyne Sr., co-founder of North Carolina's largest motorcoach company, America Charters Ltd. of Charlotte and Winston-Salem, died late last month. He was 84.

Along with his father, Robert Ray Rhyne, and brother, Robert F. Rhyne, Mr. Rhyne helped establish the company 69 years ago. For 64 years, he headed its maintenance operation, semi-retiring as vice president of maintenance three

years ago at the age of 81.

His son, Billy Ray Rhyne Jr., heads the company that is now owned by Coach America. The company has a fleet of 62 over-the-road coaches, plus a dozen commuter and midsize buses.

The senior Mr. Rhyne was a past director of the North Carolina Bus Association and an honorary lifetime member of the North Carolina Motorcoach Association. He also was a member of the

Gaston County Horsemen's Association, the Lion's Club, and the Lutheran Church.

In addition to his son, Mr. Rhyne is survived by his wife of 64 years, Gladys Powell Rhyne, and two grandchildren.

A memorial has been established with Our Saviour Lutheran Church, P.O. Box 457, Dallas, NC 28034.



William Rhyne

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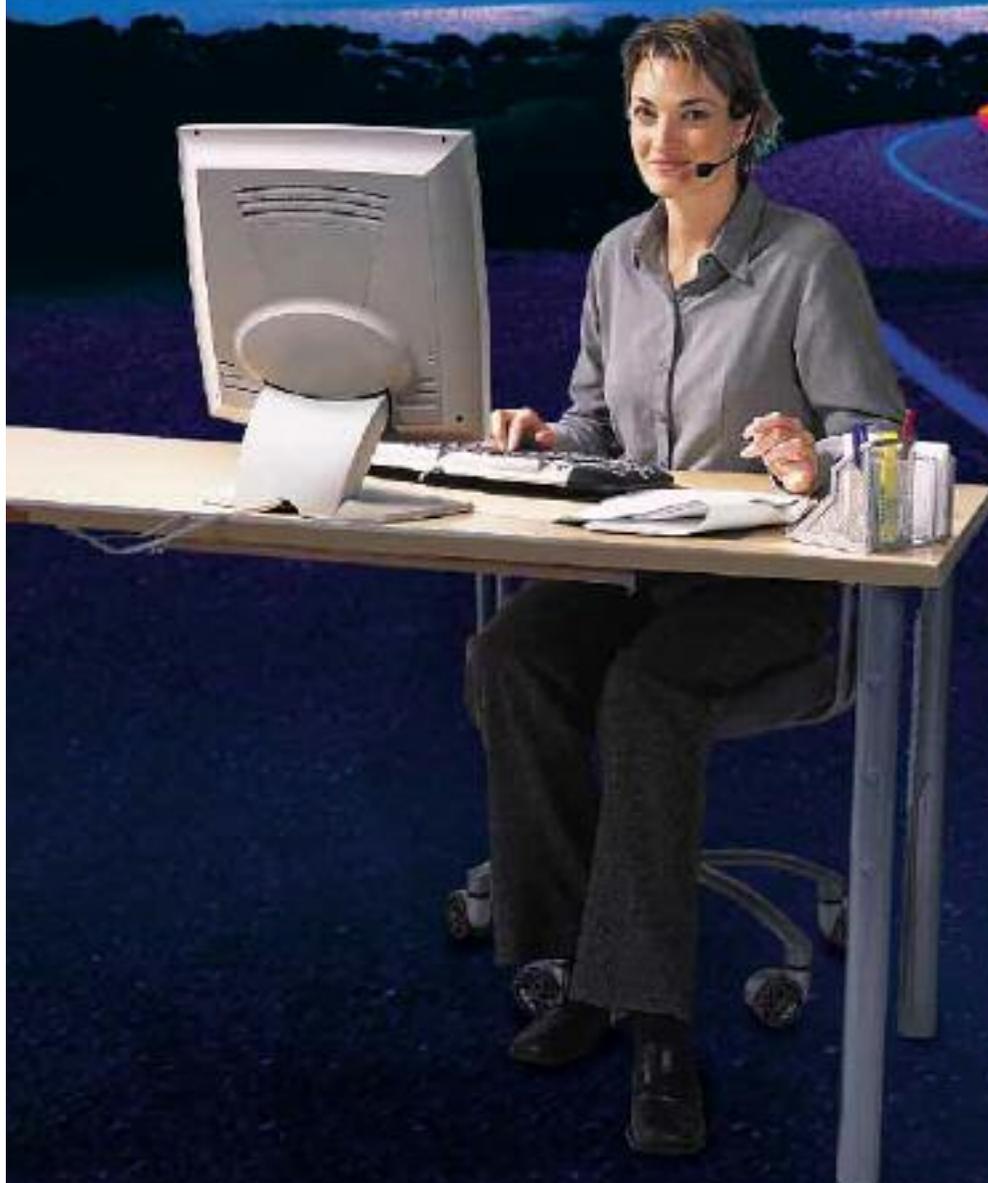
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