

# Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY



A technician checks the A/C system on a new MCI coach. System pressures, in conjunction with temperatures, will help determine the correct refrigerant charge level. (Photo: Carrier Transicold/MCI).

## Price of A/C refrigerant jumps

### Is cheap R134a ancient history?

Motorcoach operators in the nation's heat belt are feeling the pinch of unprecedented increases in the price of the refrigerant they use to keep their passengers cool.

"It's just getting ridiculous," said Jim Rossadillo, who heads the maintenance unit at Citizen Auto Stage in Tucson, Ariz., where desert temperatures top 100 degrees most summer days.

Rossadillo and his staff have stepped up maintenance of the air conditioning systems on Citizen's 34 coaches in an effort to catch leaks quickly and reduce refrigerant losses.

Randy Alwood, maintenance supervisor at Annett Bus Lines in Sebring, Fla., where cooling is needed year around, said his crew has begun checking the air conditioning units on the 46 coaches in his fleet at least once a week. "They're not sealed units so you can't make them 100 percent leak

proof, but if you keep up with your problems you can come pretty close," he said.

The cause of their concerns — and stepped up maintenance — is the price of R134a refrigerant, which has soared from about \$2 a pound at the start of the year to between \$10 and \$12 a pound last month.

Most coach operators buy it in 30-pound cylinders, although some larger carriers use 100-pound containers. The amount each bus uses

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## Bus safety company pushes for 'registry' for school charters

FAIRFAX, Va. — Motorcoach operators willing to undergo stringent safety inspections of their drivers and equipment and have their operations evaluated regularly would have a shot at substantially increasing their school charter business under an ambitious program being developed by a national bus safety company.

Consolidated Safety Services Inc. wants to put together a national registry of carriers that meet all government safety regulations and other standards so schools across the U.S. would be assured they are using only the best and safest charter bus companies.

Currently, most school districts and school organizations put together lists of approved carriers through competitive bidding or cursory reviews of operators' service and equipment.

CSS said a national list of highly qualified carriers would help schools avoid using poorly managed or unsafe carriers for student field trips, sports activities and other school travel.

"It would take the guess work

out of their hiring process," said Robert Watkins, vice president of the company's transportation safety division.

He said it also would eliminate possible problems caused by some school districts not working as closely with other districts as they could.

"School districts tend to operate in their own little world and don't share their information on transportation with other districts," he said "Consequently, if a carrier does a bad service in one school district, he simply moves to the next district."

Watkins, who is spearheading the CSS effort, said the model for what is being called the Pupil Transportation Safety Passenger Program would be the one the company developed successfully 15 years ago for the U.S. Department of Defense, and which it introduced a year ago in the Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland.

The results have been outstanding, says Watkins.

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## New coach sales climb 11 percent in second quarter

Second-quarter sales of new motorcoaches in the U.S. and Canada were 11 percent higher this year than during the same three months last year, *National Bus Trader* magazine reports.

Coach manufacturers sold a total of 533 new coaches during the quarter ended June 30, up from 481 units during the same period a year ago.

In the first quarter of this year, 464 new coaches were sold.

It should be noted, however, that roughly 100 of the new coaches sold during the second quarter went to two public transit systems — New York City Transit and a smaller order to GO Transit in Ontario.

As happened in the first quarter, four models from three manufacturers dominated sales in the

second quarter. In fact, the four models — the J4500 and D4500 from MCI, the Van Hool 2045, and the Prevost H3-45 — accounted for 84 percent of total seated-coach sales.

The fifth best-selling coach during the second quarter was the Setra S 417; No. 6 was the new MCI D4505, and No. 7 was the Prevost LeMirage XL II.

The percentage of new coaches bought by Canadians grew significantly during the second quarter, with 10.5 percent of the total going to Canadian operators. That compares with 6.5 percent in the first quarter, and 7.3 percent during the second quarter of 2004.

In all likelihood, an industry milestone was reached during the second quarter when the ZF-AS

Tronic transmission was installed in 50 percent of all seated coaches delivered to private operators.

The AS Tronic's market share in the overall motorcoach sector is smaller because — so far — the ZF automatic stick-shift transmission is not being spec'd for conversion shells or those going to government agencies. ZF's share of the total

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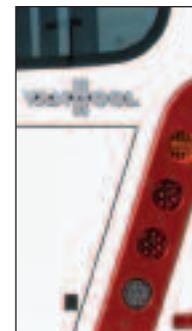
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# \$8 million verdict in attack on driver of Greyhound coach

WINCHESTER, Tenn. — A federal court jury has returned an \$8 million damage verdict against Greyhound Lines in a lawsuit filed by a Michigan woman who was injured in a crash caused by a passenger who slashed the driver's throat with a box cutter, wire services and newspapers reported.

Six passengers, including the attacker, were killed in the Oct. 3, 2001, crash on Interstate 24 between Nashville and Chattanooga. A seventh died later at a hospital and 34 others on board were injured.

After a week of testimony, jurors deliberated about three hours before returning the compensatory damage verdict for 59-year-old Sharon Surles of Saginaw, Mich.

Surles' attorney, Andrew Berke of Chattanooga, said the main point of the verdict was that Greyhound get the message. Other lawsuits related to the crash are pending in Georgia. (See Aug. 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

A Greyhound spokeswoman said the company is examining the verdict and will be making a deci-

sion about an appeal.

The coach was traveling from Chicago to Orlando, Fla., when Damir Igric, a 29-year-old Croatian, attacked driver Garfield Sands around 4 a.m. as the bus was passing through Manchester, Tenn.

Sands was admitted to a hospital with two 5-inch-long, 2-inch-deep cuts to his neck.

The attack prompted Greyhound to briefly shut down its entire system.

Surles, who was traveling to visit relatives in Atlanta, stayed in a hospital longer than a month and is permanently disabled. Berke said her medical costs have totaled about \$1.6 million.

He said that during the four years before the crash, Greyhound had at least 43 incidents of a passenger attempting to assault a driver or grab the steering wheel of a moving bus. Berke argued that despite the prevalence of attacks, Greyhound never did anything to protect its drivers.

Greyhound now has barriers to protect drivers on many of its coaches.

# Boston riders flee fire on Chinatown motorcoach

BOSTON — For the second time in five months, a bus operated by a Chinatown-to-Chinatown bus service has caught fire and left passengers shaken.

The latest incident occurred late last month when a Fung Wah bus heading down Interstate 91 from Boston to New York caught fire.

The driver noticed smoke from a rear wheel near Meriden, Conn. When he pulled over to check the smoke, passengers scrambled off just moments before the coach was engulfed in flames.

One passenger told the *Boston Globe* that in another minute the passengers could have all been dead. No one was injured and no citations were issued. The bus had passed an inspection last October, according to the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Energy, the state agency that inspects commercial fleets.

A spokeswoman for Fung Wah disputed a passenger's complaint that the driver didn't help people evacuate. The spokeswoman told the *Boston Herald* the driver told

the passengers to evacuate the bus and then began using a fire extinguisher.

In March, a bus operating under the name Travel Pack, a competitor of Fung Wah for the cut-rate Chinatown-to-Chinatown trade, was destroyed on the Massachusetts Turnpike. (See April 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.) No one was injured in that fire either.

Once passengers on the Fung Wah bus got to New York the company ignored their pleas for medical help and insurance claims. The angry passengers refused to leave the small Fung Wah office and their protest did not end until a New York City police officer ran the license plate of the bus and gave passengers the name of the company's insurer.

In response to the blaze, Paul Alfonso, head of the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Energy, said Fung Wah and Lucky Star, another low-fare operator, would be subject to surprise inspections three times a month. Currently, the buses are inspected once a month.

# CBA fights transit feeder service

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — The California Bus Association is fighting a proposed state law that would allow Monterey Salinas Transit District to provide Amtrak Thruway bus services from Monterey to San Jose, Calif., which is more than 70 miles away.

Under the proposed service, the transit agency would enter into a contract with Caltrans, the state transportation agency, to provide the Amtrak rail feeder service.

The CBA is opposing the proposal on several grounds but primarily because of prohibitions

against federally funded transit agencies operating outside of their jurisdictions, said Mike Waters, president of the association and vice president/general manager of CUSA Franciscan Lines and San Francisco Sightseeing.

Additionally, the CBA says the proposal would:

- Circumvent and change state policy to subsidize commuter bus service.
- Violate state law that prohibits public transit districts from receiving Amtrak/Caltrans Thru-

way bus funds for service outside their jurisdictions.

• Violate federal law that prohibits public transit operators from receiving federal Amtrak funds to operate feeder bus service.

On top of that, says Waters, the staff of the Monterey Salinas Transit has admitted that additional Caltrans funding would not be enough to cover the cost of the proposed service. To make up the difference, the transit agency will seek additional money from Congress to fund the route.

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# THE DOCKET

## UMA-ABA present security-emergency planning workshops

WASHINGTON — The United Motorcoach Association and the American Bus Association are presenting a series of Security and Emergency Preparedness Planning workshops, starting this fall at 10 locations across the U.S.

The free workshops are being financed with a grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and will be co-sponsored by a number of state and regional motorcoach associations or held in conjunction with key industry events.

"These workshops are intended to assist the motorcoach industry in developing security and emergency preparedness plans," said Carmen Daecher of Daecher Consulting Group, which is organizing the forums for the two associations.

"Operators can no longer afford to be naïve; to think that it cannot happen to their operations

or in their towns. No matter where you go, no matter what you do, the possibility of being affected by a terrorist act is real," said Daecher.

The security and safety consultant says the best preparation and defense for a terrorist event is to have a well-conceived security and emergency preparedness plan that includes:

- Employee preparation and training
- Facility security
- Vehicle security
- Cyber security
- Emergency/crisis response procedures
- Business recovery plans

The key topics to be covered at the workshops are: Building and implementing a security and emergency preparedness plan, and how to train employees.

There is no fee to attend one of the day-and-a-half workshops, which are being targeted to motor-



Carmen Daecher

coach company owners, safety managers and other management personnel. However, Daecher says anyone in the industry who has an interest in attending may do so. "The only requirement is that anyone who attends completes a registration form," he added.

The workshops begin next month in New Jersey and conclude in February in Hartford, Conn. Trade associations, marketing organizations and others will be distributing registration materials.

Questions about the workshops should be directed to the Daecher Consulting Group at (717) 975-9190, or e-mail [security@safetyteam.com](mailto:security@safetyteam.com).

Here's the workshop schedule:

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## FMCSA floats proposal to overhaul motorcoach, truck inspection system

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has published a notice indicating it may want to completely revamp the nation's commercial vehicle inspection process and wrest control of the system from the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance.

The notice was published last month in the *Federal Register* and bears the innocuous title of *Request for Information on New Commercial Vehicle Safety Inspection Concepts*.

Beyond the mild-mannered heading, however, is a busload of suggestions from the FMCSA that say the way to improve U.S. commercial vehicle inspections is load big buses and big trucks with every sort of electronic recording and monitoring system you can imagine.

These systems would constantly maintain data on at least 11 critical safety areas, including:

- Tire condition
- Vehicle weight
- Driver qualifications
- Lighting system
- Exhaust system
- Vehicle inspection history
- Brake condition
- Driver hours of service
- Carrier performance
- Suspension
- Steering

Not only would the on-board gizmos track vehicle- and driver-related systems and areas, but they also would broadcast the information to weigh stations and roadside inspection teams so they could decide which vehicles to inspect and which to let pass.

The goal says the FMCSA is to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and long-term results of commercial vehicle safety inspections.

For motorcoach operators,

such systems would add significantly to the cost of a new bus and there are a number of issues related to privacy.

There may be other unstated reasons for the FMCSA proposal.

In May 1999, then-U.S. Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater announced an ambitious 10-year goal of a 50-percent reduction in commercial vehicle fatalities. The department is no where close to meeting that goal — with 2009 barely more than three years away. Last year, there was a rise in fatalities, not a decrease.

There also is speculation that the current FMCSA administration is hell-bent on taking back control of the commercial vehicle inspection process from the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, the not-for-profit association of state, provincial and federal officials responsible for the administration and enforcement of motor carrier safety laws in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

In the preamble to its notice, the FMCSA noted how labor intensive, disjointed and slow the current CVSA-operated commercial vehicle inspection system is.

The FMCSA is "attempting to develop feasible operational concepts for partially or fully automating the commercial vehicle inspection process," the agency said. "Greater automation has the potential to improve the quality of inspections, increase the number of vehicles screened and inspected, and/or enable faster inspections."

Public comments on the proposal are due Oct. 17. To find the notice, go to <http://www.smartpdf.com/register/2005/Aug/16/48228B.pdf> or <http://es.bna.com/federal1/20050816/dot70p48229frnot20050816.html>.

## Transits seek charter companies

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 or to bid on contract opportunities. UMA urges appropriate operators to take the time to respond to these notices:

**Athens, Pa. and surrounding counties.** Deadline: Sept. 1, 2005. Write to: Karen Graber, General Manager, Endless Mountains Transportation Authority, RR 1, Box 23, Route 220, Athens, PA 18810. (570) 888-7330.

**Ashtabula County, Ohio.** Deadline: Sept. 7, 2005. Write to: Susan Stoneman, Project Manager, Ashtabula County Transportation System, P.O. Box 1650, Ashtabula, OH 44005. Phone: (440) 994-2020.

**Danville, Ill.** Deadline: Sept. 9, 2005. Write to: Richard L. Brazda, Director of Public Transportation, Danville Mass Transit, 101 N. Jackson St., Danville, IL 61832. Phone: (217) 431-0653.

**Berkeley County, W.Va.** Deadline: Sept. 12, 2005. Write to: Lynn Weiger, director, Eastern

Panhandle Transit Authority, 446 Novak Dr., Martinsburg, WV 25401. Phone: (304) 263-0876.

**Martinsburg/Berkeley counties, W.Va.** Deadline: Sept. 12, 2005. Write to: Lynn Weiger, Director, Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority, 446 Novak Dr., Martinsburg, WV 25401.

**Texarkana, Ark. and Texas.** Deadline: Sept. 12, 2004. Write to: General Manager, Texarkana Urban Transit District, 818 Elm St., Texarkana, TX 75501. Phone: (903) 794-8883.

**Battle Creek, Mich.** Deadline: Sept. 13, 2005. Write to: Jerry Hutchison, Transit Manager, Battle Creek Transit, 339 W. Michigan Ave., Battle Creek, MI 49017. Phone: (269) 966-3477.

**Morgan County, Ohio.** Deadline: Sept. 16, 2005. Write to: Morgan County Commissioners, 155 Main St., McConnelsville, Ohio 43756. Phone: (740) 962-3183.

**Monroe County, Ohio.** Deadline: Sept. 21, 2005. Write to: Denise Potts, Transportation Coordinator, Monroe County, P.O. Box 507, Woodsfield, Ohio 43793. Phone: (740) 472-2531.

## Transit offers trolley charters

FRANKLIN, Tenn. — The Franklin Transit Authority has four trolley buses and it wants to occasionally rent them to private coach operators. Franklin, Tenn., is a suburb of Nashville.

Billy Higgins, vice president of operations and finance at Franklin Transit, said the trolleys are used for regular-route service from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, and will be available for use by charter bus companies on weekends and evenings. The trolleys were purchased with state funds.

Franklin Transit has issued a notice of the availability of the trolleys to qualified bus companies. Operators interested in the trolleys should submit a statement of desire and capability, plus proof of legal operating authority, to the agency.

The deadline is Sept. 20, 2005. The letter should be sent to: Franklin Transit Authority; Attn.: Contract Department; 108 Fourth Ave. South, Ste. 209, Franklin, TN 37064. Phone: (615) 790-0604.

## IRS to study Sub S corps.

WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service has announced it intends to study the reporting compliance of Subchapter S (closely held) corporations with federal tax requirements.

Over the past 20-odd years, the number of Sub S corporations has more than quadrupled, to well over 3 million, and they now outnumber regular "C" corporations.

The IRS will be examining a random 5,000 Sub S corporation returns from 2003 and 2004, to assess whether the income, deductions and credits claimed by the companies were properly reported as they flowed through to the shareholders.

For more information, go to [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov), and search for Information Release IR-2005-76.

# Truckers get new HOS regs that resemble existing rules

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has issued new hours-of-service rules for truckers that are largely unchanged from those issued in 2003.

However, the new rules do change sleeper-berth provisions and ease restrictions for some short-haul drivers.

But for most over-the-road truck drivers, the new rule doesn't alter the existing regulation much, maintaining the rule's limits on driving, work and rest hours. Drivers may spend 11 hours behind the wheel in a 14-hour work day but then must rest for 10 hours.

American Trucking Association's President Bill Graves said the new rule "confirms our research that the current hours-of-service rules have been measurably effective in improving safety on our nation's highways, providing for the health of truck drivers and assuring the efficient transport of our nation's goods."

Joan Claybrook, president of Public Citizen, one of several safety groups that sued to have the rules overturned, said the new regulation was "a disappointment."

The most significant change allows short-haul truckers that are not required to have a commercial driver license, like landscape crews and delivery drivers who work within 150 miles of their starting point, to extend their work day twice a week.

These drivers also will no longer have to maintain logbooks.

The FMCSA said this change was prompted by safety data that show short-haul drivers make up over half the commercial fleet, yet are involved in less than 7 percent of the nation's fatigue-related fatal truck crashes.

Another change contained in the new rules requires truckers who use sleeper berths to rest for eight hours in a row, and take another two consecutive hours off duty before resetting their daily driving schedule.

The new regulations do not change the rules for motorcoach drivers.

The FMCSA was under an appeals court mandate to revise its hours-of-service rules for truckers by the end of this month. But, instead of revamping the rules, the agency made modest changes and accumulated a truckload of information that says the current rules do what the court wanted.

Among other things, the appeals court said the FMCSA did not consider the rules' impact on driver health when the rules were revised two years ago. In January, the FMCSA asked for public com-

ment on how the regulations could be improved to meet the court's requirements and requested data about the industry's experience under the regulations.

In announcing the revisions to the '03 rules, the FMCSA said it tasked driver health and safety experts to review more than 1,000

health- and fatigue-related articles and studies and consider thousands of comments received from drivers, truck companies, safety advocates and researchers. Based on the research, FMCSA concluded the new rules will keep drivers healthy and reduce the 5.5 percent of fatal truck crashes that are caused by

driver fatigue.

"This new rule will help keep drivers healthy and make our roads safer," said Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta. "Drivers that are well rested are less likely to lose control, crash, or injure others."

"The research shows that this new rule will improve driver health

and safety and the safety of our roadways," said FMCSA Administrator Annette M. Sandberg. "Ensuring drivers obtain necessary rest and restorative sleep will save lives."

The new rule goes into effect Oct. 1. For more information, or to review the new hours-of-service rules, go to [www.fmsca.dot.gov](http://www.fmsca.dot.gov).

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# FMCSA announces revisions to key safety regulations

WASHINGTON – The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has announced an overhaul of that section of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations that covers key safety equipment on buses — brakes, lights, windows, fuel systems and a host of other components.

The agency issued a final rule that amends Part 393 — Parts and Accessories Necessary for Safe Operations — of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations.

The rule should be of particular interest to coach industry mainte-

nance personnel, as well as coach builders.

In announcing the rule, the FMCSA said that, in general, the rule isn't intended to establish new or more stringent requirements but to clarify existing requirements, and make many sections more concise, easier to understand and more performance oriented.

Readers of the 54-page rule will have to decide for themselves whether the revisions are easier to understand or if there is any sort of "performance orientation" associated with them.

Here's a sampling of the changes:

- A requirement that rear side marker lamps be visible in the rearview mirror is removed. The revision reflects a simple reality: The requirement was impractical.

- The requirement for emergency exits is modified, including changes to the identification and marking of emergency exits.

- Requirements for push-out windows are revised to say that no more than two mechanisms are allowed in order to release an exit window, and that one person must

be capable of operating the releases. Also, the force required to release the exit mechanism should not exceed 20 pounds and the force needed to open a window exit should not be more than 60 pounds.

- Speedometers are required to operate with "reasonable accuracy."

- A requirement that fire extinguishers be mounted so the extinguisher doesn't slide, roll or move around.

- Makes clear that when the overall width of a bus is measured, such things as signal lamps, mirrors, marker lamps, flexible fender

extensions, and mud flaps are not included in the measurement.

- A requirement that service brake chambers and spring brake chambers on each end of the axle must be the same size.

- A requirement that the effective length of slack adjusters on each end of the axle be the same length.

The rule goes into effect Sept. 14. The complete rule can be found at <http://frwebgate3.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/waisgate.cgi?WAISdocID=51827810911+6+0+0&WALSAction=retrieve>.

## R134a

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depends on the condition of the air conditioning system, where the coach is being used, and the daily temperatures.

"We could go through as much as 300 pounds in the summer months," said Steve Raidy, maintenance director at Central West of Texas, a charter company in Grand Prairie near Dallas and Fort Worth.

While most carriers are being forced to pay the high prices, a few were tipped off that the price would be increasing and were able to stock up at bargain prices.

Larry Cooper, head of maintenance at Southeastern Stages in Atlanta, Ga., was among them. He bought 18 30-pound cylinders in June for \$160 each, or \$5.33 a pound.

"Some people called and told me I better do something because

the price was heading to \$250 or \$300, so I took a shot at what I thought we would use and bought it," he said.

Analysts say a key reason for the big price jump is that there are only a handful of chemical manufacturers in the world — four in the United States — that produce R134a, and they're turning out just about the same amount each year that they did 10 years ago when it replaced CFC-12. Meantime, the demand has risen steadily with just about every motor vehicle rolling off assembly lines in the United States, Japan, Korea and Europe packing air conditioning.

Additionally, they say the price was artificially low during the early years of the conversion to R134a because the supply was ahead of the demand. And, the higher price of today not only could be more realistic but possibly be here to stay.

"Anybody who did not think the price of 134a was going to go up when they made everybody convert to it was a fool to start with," suggests Alwood.

Further production instability comes from the European Community's decision to ban R134a by 2011. Some manufacturers in Europe have already converted their plants to produce R125, which is believed to be less harmful to the environment than R134a. At the same time, some developing countries are in the process of converting their air conditioning units to R134a.

While motorcoach operators know they can't hold down the price of the refrigerant, they are working to hold down the amount they are using.

Tom Koehler, head of maintenance at Arrow Stage Lines in Phoenix, said he is looking into going back to cleaning and reusing

the refrigerant, a practice he said the company quit doing several years ago. "We could be doing it again in just a couple of weeks," he said.

Several other companies said they already run their used refrigerant through a cleaning and filtering process that allows them to use it another two or three times.

In addition to recycling, mechanics also are paying much closer attention to air conditioning units when they perform regular service on their buses.

"We just try to stay on top of it and so far our maintenance plan has been working out very well," said Rossadillo, whose coach air conditioners get a thorough inspection each time a bus comes in for service. "As hot as it has been, we've only lost two seals so far this summer."

Raidy said he, too, has stepped up his inspections and is quick to replace hoses and seals at the first

sign of a problem. "We are monitoring our air conditioners much more closely now," he notes.

Cooper has gone a step further by switching to metal hoses on the air conditioning units on his buses. "We think it is pretty good protection for us," he said. "You can't blow them up."

Despite the jump in prices, it has yet to have much impact on the bottom line at most companies. "It's just part of the cost of doing business," says Cooper.

Koehler agreed, and said the high cost of diesel fuel is having much more of an affect on company finances. "Still, anytime you have a price increase that you did not expect, it can have some affect on your bottom line," he stressed.

The carriers said the large increase in the price of engine oil is having only a modest impact as well. But they all are watching the cost carefully.

## Registry

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When the program was introduced to the military in 1990, the Defense Department had 790 charter bus companies on its approved list of carriers that it could use, and was receiving about 25 applications a month from companies that wanted to be on the list. After CSS began scrutinizing the carriers and inspecting their equipment, the list of approved companies dropped to about 420 and the number of applications fell to about three monthly.

CSS still manages the program for the Defense Department.

In Montgomery County, the number of companies on its approved list of carriers was trimmed to 24 from 36, and the number of service complaints the school district had been receiving dropped substantially.

"It has worked very well for us," said Giles Benson, director of the Department of Materials Man-

agement for the school system. "It gave us more assurance than we had in past years that the carriers that are transporting our students are the best ones out there."

Additionally, he noted that early concerns he had that the reduced list of approved carriers might lead to there not being enough buses available when the schools needed them proved to be unwarranted. "We did not hear anyone on the list tell us they could not provide buses when we called for them," he said.

Watkins said school districts in Carroll and Howard counties in Maryland joined the program this year and several other counties in Maryland and other states are looking into it. "The schools are starting to talk about it," he noted.

Here's how the program works: After a school district signs on, CSS performs an extensive review of each company interested in being on the district's approved list of carriers. The review includes an

examination of the company's operating authority, insurance records, safety compliance, and performance history. The operator then is given a seven-page questionnaire to test its knowledge of federal motorcoach regulations.

CSS then performs a comprehensive evaluation of every aspect of the carrier's operation, including drivers and buses. After that, the carrier is subject to biannual on-site inspections and unannounced vehicle inspections that are similar to roadside inspections conducted by regulators.

Each carrier that makes it through the process successfully not only would be approved for the individual school district, but would be placed on the national list so that school districts around the country that belong to the program would have access to them as well as their own. Additionally, operators who are on the Defense Department list would be added to the national list automatically if

they were to apply to be placed on an individual school list.

"Districts and counties benefit from nationwide access when they need ground transportation outside their jurisdiction to supplement air travel," noted Watkins.

He said school districts would be charged by the number of students they have in their district, and the price would be reduced to pennies as the program grows because many of the same carriers would apply for multiple districts and they only would have to be put through the approval process once.

"We have a way to use economies of scale to help the districts," he said, noting that the \$45,000 that Montgomery County now pays annually could be reduced to about \$8,000 a year if every county school district in Maryland were to join.

The program has caught the attention of motorcoach carriers and some think it is a good idea.

Peter Pan Bus Lines, which is on Montgomery County's approved carrier list, likes it so much it is talking with state lawmakers about pushing for legislation that would require schools in Maryland to use only motorcoach companies that meet the high standards set by the program.

"I kind of think the system CSS provides for the schools is perfect," said Peter Pan safety director Chris Crean. "Right now the schools call and ask for a certificate of insurance, but to be honest, I don't think they really know what they should be looking for."

Dave Brown, owner of Holiday Tours, backs the idea, too. "I think it is a great concept," he said. "This is far better than the way we presently try to get on school approved lists in a county-by-county fashion."

For more information, go to <http://pupiltransportation.consoldatedsafety.com/index.asp>.

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## Two things to like — a lot

There are a couple of areas of the new federal highway and public transportation reauthorization law that haven't received much attention but which hold significant promise for many motorcoach operators.

First, the law that President Bush signed last month bans state liability-without-fault laws that apply to vehicle leases. That means motorcoach leasing should open up or expand in states such as New York that have tough vicarious liability laws.

In a nutshell, the new federal provision prohibits laws currently in place — in 12 states for commercial vehicles and 13 states for autos — that allow an accident victim to sue not just the driver and renter of a vehicle, but also the renting or leasing company that owns the vehicle.

The legislation protects the interests of leasing and rental companies that can easily lose their business when lawsuits arise as a result of bad accidents.

The law likely will decrease losses by leasing companies and reduce their insurance costs, enabling them to expand their leasing ability and keep their rates under control.

And, under the new law, lease companies and banks are expected to be more willing to take ownership of vehicles, and more companies could get into the leasing business because they won't have to worry about being subjected to vicarious liability lawsuits. More financing choices means better deals for motorcoach operators.

The other piece of good news buried in the new law is the estab-

lishment of a revamped carrier registration system that goes into effect in 16 months.

The system will simplify the registration process, change fees to a per-fleet basis from a per-coach basis, and be expanded to include private carriers and not just for-hire carriers.

The new Unified Carrier Registration Agreement will replace the Single State Registration System that currently applies only to for-hire interstate carriers. Thousands of private truck fleets will be included in the new system. For example, the zillion trucks that Wal-Mart owns and operates will now be part of the system, along with others like Albertson's, Weyerhaeuser and many more.

The new law did not establish a fee structure for the UCRA, but in its implementing language the fees are to be designed to bring in no more money than the SSRS did. But, because the fees will be spread over a much larger universe of commercial vehicles, the new system will alter the fee structure fairly dramatically.

It will mean a significant reduction in the amount of registration fees paid by big for-hire fleets (like Greyhound and others), and more modest reductions for smaller fleets.

A tiered registration fee system is to be established with companies paying a set fee based on the fleet range they fall into. For example, the categories could start with 5 or fewer coaches, 6 to 25, 26 to 50, 51 to 100, 101 to 500 and so on.

The new system is to go into effect Jan. 1, 2007.

## Amtrak's Interminable Journey

The next time one of your customers complains about their bus being a few minutes late, or you hear someone grouching because there isn't Amtrak service near by, show 'em this from the *Washington Post*.

A ride home on an Amtrak train from Florida to Virginia late last month turned into a two-day ordeal for Deanna Weaver and her 5½-year-old daughters.

Train No. 92, which originated in Miami and ended in New York, was more than 14 hours late to Washington and other destinations after a slew of unscheduled stops.

The train, according to passengers and an Amtrak official, was delayed because of engine problems, the ouster of an inebriated passenger, the evacuation of a sick rider, repair work on track signals, and a pedestrian who wandered onto the tracks between Jacksonville, Fla., and Savannah, Ga., and was struck by the train.

There were conflicting reports among Amtrak officials and passengers about the incident, but the man appears to have survived.

On the train, tempers flared, bathrooms reeked and food supplies dwindled, passengers said.

"I planned this as an educational experience for my girls," said Weaver, who lives in Fairfax Station, Va., and boarded in Orlando after visiting Walt Disney World with her daughters. "I wanted to teach them about the states and give them the experience of traveling on a train instead of a plane. It was an experience, all right."

Amtrak spokesman Marc Magliari confirmed that the train

— which carried 442 passengers — encountered a series of unfortunate events after it left Miami at 8:50 a.m. on a Friday. It didn't arrive in Washington until 2:20 a.m. Sunday, slightly more than 14 hours behind schedule. The train completed its arduous journey to New York at 6:26 a.m. — 14 hours and 43 minutes late.

"This was unusual," Magliari said. "It isn't what you normally can expect on Amtrak."

*"I wanted to teach them [my girls] about the states and give them the experience of traveling on a train instead of a plane. It was an experience, all right."*

No. 92's troubles were the latest for Amtrak, which carried 25 million passengers last year but has faced several problems. Its high-speed Acela trains were taken out of service for a few months in April because of brake problems. Amtrak has struggled to break even since it began operations in 1971, and the Bush administration wants it to declare bankruptcy so it can be reorganized.

Magliari said Amtrak gave passengers free food during the trip and provided complimentary hotel rooms for about a dozen

passengers who missed their connections in Washington. Weaver, however, said she was asked to pay for everything on the train, including bottled water and a blanket.

The travel delays were exacerbated because trains are required to slow down when temperatures are very high. No. 92 had reduced its speed from 79 to 59 mph. There were further delays for Amtrak-mandated crew changes.

Magliari said he could not confirm reports by passengers that the train was hit by lightning and also delayed when a freight train collided with a truck. Passenger Sandy Mayson, 24, of Washington, said the collision occurred near Palatka, Fla.

The trip "was incredible," Mayson said. "The conductors were saying that there wasn't a whole lot anybody could have done — just a series of bizarre natural catastrophes, except for the signal going down."

The longest delay was outside Fredericksburg, Va. The train stopped for more than five hours for signal repair work by CSX Corp., which owns the tracks. Magliari said Amtrak had been told by CSX that the work would take about an hour.

CSX spokeswoman Jane Covington said the repairs are intended to improve the system, and that CSX would review with Amtrak what occurred.

When the train started up again, Weaver didn't wait to get to Alexandria, Va. She said she and her children disembarked when the train made an unscheduled stop in Quantico to let off an elderly couple.

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## To the Editor: Insurance savings or safety savings?

I believe your recent article *Insurance breaks for safety gear? Don't count on it* (Aug. 1), misrepresents the interests of operators.

Operators who have made investments in new safety technologies, such as fire suppression and tire-monitoring systems, have overwhelmingly identified im-

proved customer well-being as their overriding reason for making those investments.

While operators would welcome any insurance premium reductions insurers might offer now or in the future, they understand that the ultimate value of safety equipment is in increasing

passenger safety and reducing equipment losses.

The article extols the virtues of DriveCam. DriveCam has proven to be valuable in providing evidence after an incident has occurred. Yet the real soul of safety equipment and training is to prevent incidents from occurring.

Many of the technologies noted in the article can help accomplish this.

Equipment safety enhancements benefit all. Our industry is renowned for its excellent safety performance, and I believe progressive operators will embrace the new safety features we are

implementing as standard equipment. Their doing so will improve the already excellent safety record enjoyed by our industry.

Tom Sorrells  
President and Chief Executive  
Officer  
Motor Coach Industries

## Oil refinery upgrades not aiding output

HOUSTON — With oil at record prices, U.S. refiners are upgrading their facilities but are not adding capacity, and the upgrades will not necessarily lead to retail fuel price reductions, *The Wall Street Journal* reports.

Instead of expanding capacity, refineries are investing in equipment that can process low-grade crude oil and refitting their facilities to meet new clean-fuel requirements, the newspaper said.

The lack of new capacity could keep upward price pressure on refined fuels such as diesel, gasoline, heating oil and other finished products, the *Journal* said.

Tight refining capacity has been a factor in pushing up retail fuel prices, with refining making up about 18 percent of the cost of a gallon of gasoline. Crude oil prices make up 54 percent of the cost.

## Coach sales

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

coach market was 32.8 percent. That means the Allison B500 transmission retains 67.2 percent of the overall coach market.

The conversion sector continued to shrink slightly. A total of 79 conversion shells were sold during the second quarter of this year, versus 83 units in the first quarter and 87 units during the second quarter of last year. The conversion shell market share slipped below 15 percent, to 14.8 percent, which is lower than most recent quarters.

*National Bus Trader* Editor Larry Plachno, who compiles the magazine's sales report, noted that the trend continued in the second quarter of new coach buyers gravitating towards specific models. He speculated that if the trend continues, "we are likely to see some models discontinued because of a lack of orders."

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](mailto:lplachno@busmag.com).

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## Great Canadian Trailways Kitchener, Ont.

Great Canadian Trailways, one of the first operators in Ontario to buy a Prevost H-Series coach 15 years ago, has taken possession of three new Prevost H3-45 coaches. The company now counts 28 Prevosts in its fleet of 32 coaches.

"The ZF transmission was a huge factor for us when we decided to purchase Prevost motorcoaches," says Larry Hundt, company president. "The durability and fuel economy were particularly appealing, especially with today's rising fuel prices."

Hundt said the panoramic windows and European design of the H3 has attracted a great deal of business to the company over the years. That, and the dependability

of the Prevosts, keeps him coming back.

In addition, says Hundt, the Prevost service team deserves special recognition. "They have always been very attentive to our needs — that is one of their greatest strengths."

Hundt and his wife, Lorna, are co-owners of Great Canadian Trailways, which also employs the couple's two daughters. A tour operator first and foremost, the 21-year-old company has built a loyal following with its many sightseeing, shopping and specialty tours. It has also become a significant coach operator in its market, covering a wide geographic area. Its clientele ranges from international business

people to casino-goers.

One of the most unique aspects of the Great Canadian Trailways' operation is the livery the Hundts have developed for their coaches. They not only exhibit Canadian pride but they have given the company an extraordinary brand image.

The Hundts hire artists that air-brush scenes promoting aspects of Canadian life on the coaches.

The Nation Builders coach, for example, features 80 paintings that pay tribute to the 20 major ethnic groups that make up Canada.

Other theme coaches include Great Canadian Music, Great Canadian Moments, Great Canadian Achievements, Great Canadian Sports, Great Canadian Veterans and, of course, just Great Canadians. The company isn't even afraid to be political, as with the Great Canadian Unity paint scheme, developed during the Quebec referendum.

A theme that has been identified for one of the new coaches is Great Canadian Women.

For his latest Prevosts, Hundt specified Detroit Diesel Series 60 engines, ZF-AS tronic transmissions, Jake Brakes, Amaya Brasil passenger seats, Recaro driver seats, Alcoa wheels, REI A/V systems with five monitors, plus DVD, MP3 and VCR players, and Michelin tires.



## Cline Tours Ridgeland, Miss.

Cline Tours of suburban Jackson, Miss., has taken delivery of 10 new J4500 coaches.

"We liked the coach," said company owner John McCommon. "When you buy 10 coaches you want the royal treatment, and that type of attitude and sincerity came through with MCI and their people."

Cline Tours was established 22 years ago and acquired 11 years ago by McCommon, a businessman who eventually sold four other businesses to devote more time to the motorcoach company.

"It's a wonderful, exciting business," said McCommon, who designed and built a brand-new facil-

ity to house and service the company fleet of 14 coaches, 7 midsize buses and 65 contract vehicles.

The company is based in Ridgeland, Miss., and operates one of the largest bus fleets in the state. More information about the company can be found at [www.clinetours.com](http://www.clinetours.com).

Cline's new J models are equipped with Detroit Diesel Series 60 engines; Allison B500 transmissions; Jake Brakes; REI entertainment systems with five monitors, DVD, CD and VCR players; Amaya passenger seats; Isringhausen driver seats; Carrier A/C; Alcoa wheels; Michelin tires, and back-up cameras.



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## National Interstate reports moderate income increase

RICHFIELD, Ohio — Gains from investments boosted net income at National Interstate Corp. during the quarter ended June 30.

The second-largest insurer of over-the-road buses said it earned \$7 million during the three months ended June 30, an 8.5 percent increase from the \$6.4 million earned a year ago.

On a per-share basis, National Interstate earned 36 cents during the most recent quarter, compared to 42 cents per share for the second quarter of 2004.

The lower per-share earnings this year reflect the increased number of shares outstanding resulting from the public stock offering the company completed in February.

Most of the second-quarter earnings gain came from an increase in net investment income of \$1.1 million.

Net income for the first six months of 2005 increased by \$2.7 million to \$14.1 million, or 75 cents a share, compared to \$11.4 million, or 74 cents a share for the same period of 2004. All per-share figures are fully diluted.

National Interstate's board of directors approved a 4-cents-per-share dividend that will be payable Sept. 15, to shareholders who owned the stock on Aug. 22.

National Interstate noted that its (GAAP) combined ratio was 84.1 percent for the second quarter of this year, up from 81.4 percent for the same period last year. Slight variances in both loss and loss-adjustment expenses and underwriting expenses contributed to the 2.7-point increase this year. The combined ratio for the first six months of 2005 was virtually unchanged, 82.4 percent, from the same six months last year.

Alan Spachman, chairman and president of National Interstate, said: "We remain satisfied with our year-to-date performance, which is in line with our expectations. We have been successful in growing our business and maintaining pricing discipline in a softening commercial insurance environment. We appreciate the loyalty and support our company and products continue to receive from the customers we serve."

Spachman noted that that the company transition to public company had encountered some rocks in the road, including deficiencies in internal controls and procedures. Adjustments were recorded in the second quarter but Spachman said they were not material to the 2005 interim results.

He indicated the company would improve its procedures.

## National Interstate promotes executives to prep for future

RICHFIELD, Ohio — National Interstate Corp., parent company of the motorcoach insurance company of the same name, has promoted two of its top executives as part of a plan to grow the company and prepare for the day when company founder Alan Spachman is no longer around.

In a news release, National Interstate said David Michelson had been promoted to executive vice president and chief operating officer, the No. 2 position at the company.

Additionally, Terry Phillips was promoted to senior vice president.

In his newly created position, Michelson will lead all business operations and be responsible for achieving the corporation's written premium and underwriting profit objectives.

Michelson, who has worked at National Interstate for 13 years, previously was senior vice president.

In Phillips' expanded role, he will oversee the claims and reinsurance functions, and be responsible

for the agency programs and the new alternative transportation programs business units.

Phillips, who was promoted from vice president,

was first hired by National Interstate six years ago. Both Michelson, age 47, and Phillips, 55, will report to Spachman, the company chairman and president, who is 57.

"We are pleased to recognize these proven managers and provide them with additional opportunities to impact our results. These two promotions, along with several other changes in management assignments, are the first visible steps in the implementation of our long-term succession strategy," said Spachman.

Both Michelson and Phillips also will be focusing on National Interstate's "high-impact opportunities," the company said.



David Michelson

## Atlantic City Bus Rodeo is set for Oct. 5

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — The South Jersey Transportation Authority is sponsoring its 15th annual Bus Rodeo next month in Atlantic City.

Drivers and mechanics can win hundreds of dollars in prizes.

This year's driving and maintenance competition will be at the Atlantic City Transportation Center Bus Parking Facility on Route 40 in Atlantic City. The event will be from 8:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 5. The authority

is urging drivers and bus maintenance technicians to mark their calendars for the competition.

Registration materials are expected to be available shortly. For information, contact the Authority at (609) 345-5572, ext. 423.



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## Regional operators attend ABC bus show

ELK GROVE VILLAGE, Ill. — Mid-America Charter Lines was the location here last month for the ABC Companies Midwest/Grand Slam Bus Show.

The event attracted more than 50 people, with representatives from over 25 operators attending.

The show included two new coaches, a 2005 Van Hool C2045 equipped with the Caterpillar/ZF powertrain, and an ABC M1035 midsize coach with the Mercedes MBE900 engine. Test drives of both vehicles were offered through-

out the day. "We had a great response to both these vehicles. Mid-America Charter Lines provided breakfast, with lunch and giveaways provided by ABC Companies.

"Several operators took advantage of our show specials, so we were pleased to close a few deals by the end of the day," remarked Peter Dozark, ABC account executive for the Chicago area. Lafayette Gatling, owner of Gatling Charters of Chicago, won a \$1,000 parts and service credit with ABC

Companies.

ABC took 45 customers to a Chicago Cubs game (vs. the Cincinnati Reds) at Wrigley Field. Transportation was provided aboard the Van Hool C2045.

"We appreciate the support we have received from Mid-America in helping us host this regional show," said Lee Loper, vice president and general manager of ABC Companies Midwest region. "This is the second show at this location for ABC and the turnout and response has just been great."



## Peoria Charter Peoria, Ill.

Peoria Charter Coach has taken delivery of a 2005 Van Hool C2045.

Three generations of the Winkler family have owned and operated the company in the Peoria area for nearly 65 years. Peoria Charter specializes in tour and charter service, with the majority of its business coming from large tour companies. Other service includes daily schedules from Chicago's Midway and O'Hare airports.

The company's new C2045 is equipped with a Caterpillar C13 engine and ZF-AS Tronic transmission with interarder. Other specifications include flush-type Monogram toilet with supplemental restroom tank, enclosed parcel racks, Alcoa wheels, REI A/V system

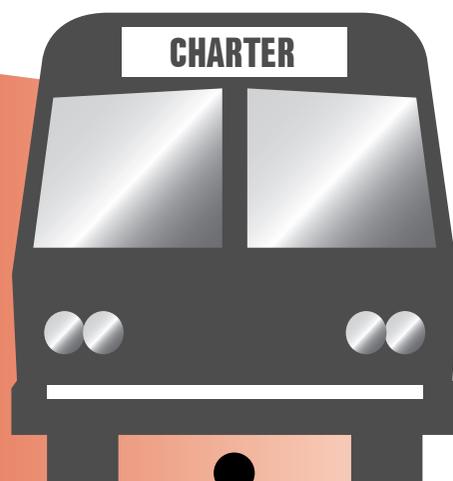
with wireless microphone and four LCD monitors, Amaya Brasil seats, and Goodyear tires.

Peter Dozark, ABC account executive, said "the Caterpillar engine was one of the major selling features for the coach, not only for the performance and reputation of the engine itself but also because of their close proximity to Caterpillar world headquarters in Peoria. Cat is an important customer of Peoria Charter."

Peoria Charter is a charter member of the Illinois Motorcoach Association and a member of International Motorcoach Group, National Motorcoach Network, American Bus Association and United Motorcoach Association.

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# 'Top of the Rock' reopens to public in NYC on Nov. 1

NEW YORK –The newly renovated Top of the Rock observation deck in Rockefeller Center will reopen to tours and the public Nov. 1.

The observation complex includes three renovated lower levels and three refurbished upper levels at the top of the 70-story architectural heart of Rockefeller Center.

The centerpiece of the sight-seeing area is the observatory that is 850 feet (259 meters) above the sidewalk.

The observation deck first opened to the public in 1933, and has been fully revitalized by the

center's owners, Tishman Speyer.

Top of the Rock will be open daily from 8:30 a.m. to midnight. The sky shuttle will make a final run at 11 p.m. each night. Introductory ticket prices are \$14 for adults, \$12 for seniors and \$9

for children six to 11 years old.

Reservations to visit Top of the Rock can be made via a Web site, [www.topoftherocknyc.com](http://www.topoftherocknyc.com), or by calling (877) 692-7625, or (212) 698-2000. The reserved-time tickets should minimize lines and

large crowds.

The observatory area includes multi-media exhibits, indoor viewing area, and new transparent, safety-glass panels that allow unobstructed open-air views of city landmarks.

## UMA/ABA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

**Oct. 12-13:** Mercer County Community College, Trenton, N.J. Co-Sponsor: Greater New Jersey Motorcoach Assn.

**Oct. 28-29:** California Bus Association 32nd Annual Convention & Trade Show, La Quinta Resort & Club, La Quinta (Palm Springs), Calif. Co-sponsor: CBA.

**Nov. 3-4:** Hilton Myrtle Beach Hotel, Myrtle Beach, S.C. Co-sponsor Southeastern Regional Motorcoach Operators.

**Nov. 17-18:** Portland International Airport Conference Center, Portland. Co-sponsor: Northwest Motorcoach Assn.

**Dec. 8-9:** Chicago. Co-sponsor: Illinois Motorcoach Assn.

**Dec. 12-13:** National Transportation Safety Board Academy, Ashburn, Va. Sponsored by UMA.

**Jan. 16-17:** International Motor Coach Group Maintenance & Safety Forum, Tampa, Fla. Co-sponsor: IMG.

**Feb. 2-3:** Gaylord Opryland Resort, Nashville. Sponsor: ABA

**Feb. 6-7:** 70th Annual Trailways Conference and Meeting, Scottsdale, Ariz. Co-sponsor: Trailways Transportation System.

**Feb. 20-21:** Hartford, Conn. Co-sponsor: New England Bus Association.

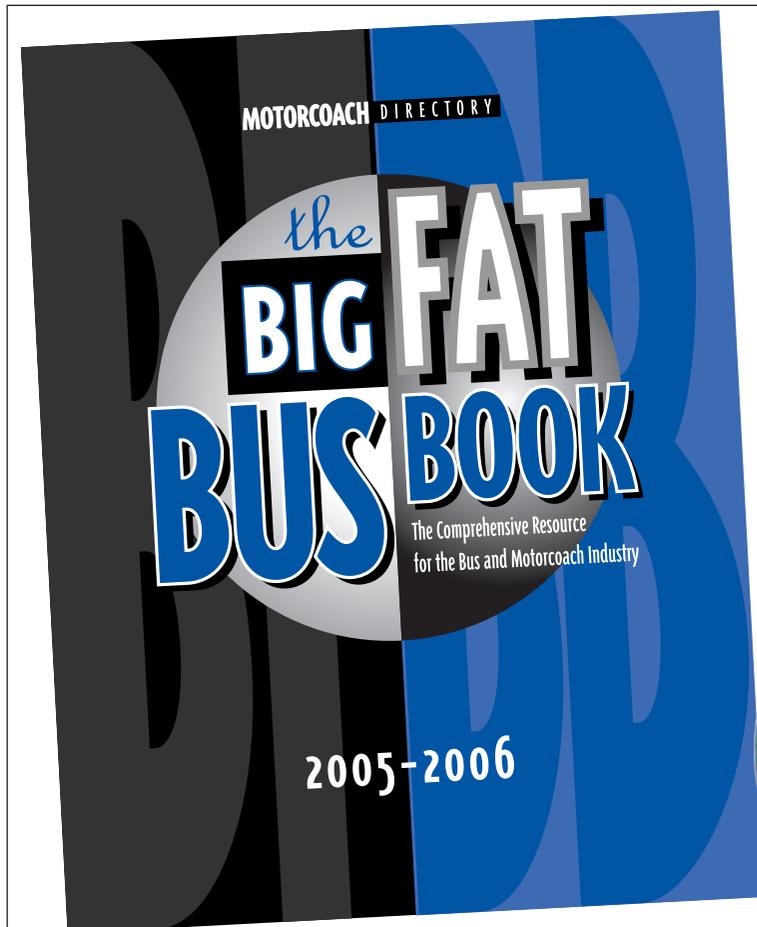
## CBA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

"Private, taxpaying motorcoach companies cannot compete against double let alone triple-subsidized public transit districts," Waters said in a letter to members of the California General Assembly.

He said there were several alternatives available from private operators, or Caltrans could be required to implement an interline agreement, where feasible, with existing private motorcoach operators to pick up train passengers along the proposed corridor and to pay a flat rate for each passenger.

For more information, call (916) 835-3036 or (916) 447-8982, or e-mail [pane@cwo.com](mailto:pane@cwo.com).



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## Fuel saving is focus of training

TORONTO — Motor Coach Canada is co-sponsoring a series of workshops this fall designed to teach drivers fuel conservation techniques that also should make them safer drivers.

Called SmartDriver for Motor Coach, the program was developed by National Resources Canada, and is being presented by Motor Coach Canada and Marsh Canada, the insurance services company.

Initially, a SmartDriver "master trainer" session will be conducted on Sept. 22 in Toronto, after which train-the-trainer sessions will be conducted in 15 cities across Canada.

The train-the-trainer sessions are expected to begin in mid-October and conclude in December. Information and registration materials promoting the sessions are expected to be distributed shortly.

The program consists of a one-day workshop comprised of different modules where coach drivers learn about fuel conservation measures in an interactive and fun manner, said Brian Crow, president of Motor Coach Canada.

"Motor Coach Canada supports this program not only because it will significantly reduce fuel consumption but also because a driver

that conserves fuel also reduces other operating expenses, is less likely to be involved in collisions, and provides a smoother, more comfortable ride for passengers," said Crow. "A smoother, safer and fuel-saving driver is good for our members, our industry's image, the passengers we carry and the environment," added Crow.

Motor Coach Canada assisted National Resources Canada with the design and development of the program.

For more information contact Dave Carroll, director of safety and maintenance at Motor Coach Canada, (416) 229-9305 ext. 230.

## Motorcoach/Tour/School Bus Company for Sale

*Will sell in part or in whole*

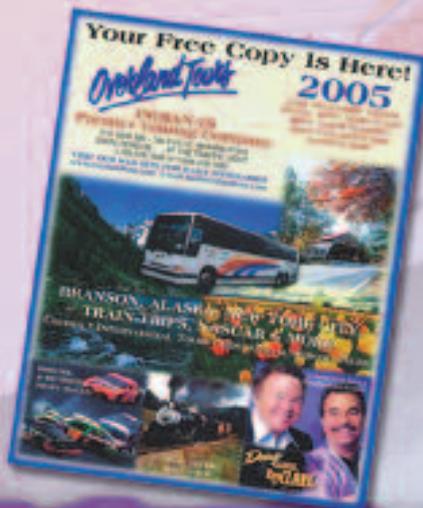
Due to the recent death of my wife, we have decided to place our 22-year-old business up for sale. We are negotiable and somewhat flexible with various aspects of the sale. We are seeing the best years of the company to date for the following reasons: 1) As a result of our company having offered 22 years of excellent service and we are the preferred carrier of many of our long-standing clients. 2) As a result of multiple failures of our competitors who have made poor decisions which resulted in their closings and bankruptcies. 3) As a result of continuing to be an extremely low debt-free company.

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As president, I am willing to stay on with the business for a limited time until reins of control are transferred to the satisfaction of the buyers. Our market is a 90-mile radius which covers Indiana's two largest cities, Indianapolis and Fort Wayne, and reaching into western Ohio.

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## Calendar

### SEPTEMBER 2005

**7-9 Hawaii Transportation Association Annual Conference**, Waikiki Beach Marriott Resort, Honolulu. Info: Go to [www.htahawaii.org](http://www.htahawaii.org).

**9-13 Virginia Motorcoach Association Annual Meeting & Marketplace**, Embassy Suites, Hampton, Va. Info: (434) 376-1150 or go to [www.vamotorcoach.com](http://www.vamotorcoach.com).

**11-15 2005 International Conference on Fatigue Management in Transportation Operations**, Sheraton Seattle Hotel and Towers, Seattle. Info: Go to [www.engr.washington.edu/epp/fmto](http://www.engr.washington.edu/epp/fmto) or call (866) 791-1275.

**24-29 Fall Workshop Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance**, Beau Rivage, Biloxi, MS 39530. Info: Go to [www.cvsaa.org](http://www.cvsaa.org).

**25-27 Louisiana Motorcoach Association Meeting & Marketplace**, Isle of Capri Casino, Biloxi, Miss. Info: Go to [www.lamotorcoachassociation.org](http://www.lamotorcoachassociation.org)

**25-28 Annual Meeting, American Public Transportation Association**, Dallas Convention Center, Dallas. Info: [www.apta.com/expo](http://www.apta.com/expo).

**26-28 International Public Transportation Expo 2005**, Dallas Convention Center, Dallas. Info: American Public Transportation Assoc., [www.apta.com](http://www.apta.com) or call (800) 687-7469 Ext. 208.

### OCTOBER 2005

**23-26 Ontario Motor Coach Association Conference & Marketplace**, Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel, Toronto. Info: (416) 229-6622 or go to [www.omca.com](http://www.omca.com).

**29-Nov. 1 32nd Annual California Bus Association Convention & Trade Show**, LaQuinta Resort & Club, LaQuinta/Palm Springs, Calif. Info: (800) 664-2877 or go to [www.cbabus.com](http://www.cbabus.com).

### NOVEMBER 2005

**4-8 National Tour Association Annual Convention**, Detroit. Info: Go to [www.ntaonline.com](http://www.ntaonline.com).

## ABA sponsors briefings on law

WASHINGTON — The American Bus Association is sponsoring a series of briefings on the new federal highway and public transit reauthorization law. (See Aug. 15 issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

The regional ABA "What's in it for You?" briefings are being scheduled for:

- September in Dallas
- October in Sacramento, Calif.
- November in Chicago
- December in Charlotte, N.C.

The briefings will explain the new law and its benefits for motorcoach operators.

For more information, go to [www.buses.org](http://www.buses.org).

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# Expo Maintenance Interchange is one-of-a-kind event

TAMPA, Fla. — The United Motorcoach Association has announced that the popular Maintenance Interchange will be back for an encore at Motorcoach Expo 2006.

The unique seminar allows motorcoach owners, operators and maintenance personnel to openly discuss tough maintenance issues.

The 8th annual Maintenance Interchange will take place Thursday, Jan. 19, during the Solution Sessions phase of Expo.

The Maintenance Interchange retains its popularity among Expo participants because it is a great resource for solving tough motorcoach maintenance problems.

In the past, participants have found the Interchange to be helpful for both saving money and maintaining their equipment.

According to Dave Bolen of New World Tours in Bristow, Va., “the technical discussions and solutions that are presented are specific to the products we are maintaining on a daily basis. I have found them to be useful in reducing the lifecycle cost of our fleet.”

In advance of the Interchange, participants submit pressing maintenance issues they would like addressed at the session. During the day-long event, each maintenance issue is presented and discussed by the operators and maintenance personnel in attendance. Others may have dealt with similar

issues and offer their suggestions for solving the problem.

Operators have found the Maintenance Interchange to be extremely helpful because of its unique tone and the effectiveness of the problem-solving. To facilitate the discussion, the session is designed as an operator-to-operator

exchange, excluding vendors, manufacturers and sales personnel.

“The Maintenance Interchange is a great opportunity for shop personnel to speak frankly about service problems that plague us all,” said Gladys Gillis, CEO of Starline Transportation. “I saw mechanics open up in this environment, no

vendors allowed. They were sharing their own creative solutions to common problems!”

The Maintenance Interchange will be from 9 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 19. The Maintenance Interchange is FREE for Motorcoach Expo registrants with a small fee for those not registered

for Expo. If you are interested in registering for the Maintenance Interchange, e-mail [info@uma.org](mailto:info@uma.org) or call the United Motorcoach Association at (800) 424-8262. Look for registration forms in the coming months in UMA's newsletter, *The Exchange*, and the Motorcoach Expo e-mail newsletter.

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## Detroit Diesel marks 75,000<sup>th</sup> Series 60 engine

DETROIT — Detroit Diesel Corporation celebrated the shipment last month of its 75,000th Series 60 engine, with the milestone power plant going to one of its best customers, Penske Truck Leasing.

For more than a decade, the Detroit Diesel Series 60 engine has been the engine of choice for North American motorcoach operators.

“This is a tremendous achievement for us at Detroit Diesel given the extensive history we have with Penske Truck Leasing,” said Carsten Reinhardt, president and CEO of Detroit Diesel.

Penske Truck Leasing took delivery of its first Series 60 engine in 1990 with an order of 47 units. Last year, the company took delivery of more than 8,200 Series 60 engines.

Detroit Diesel is a subsidiary of DaimlerChrysler and part of the Freightliner Group of companies.

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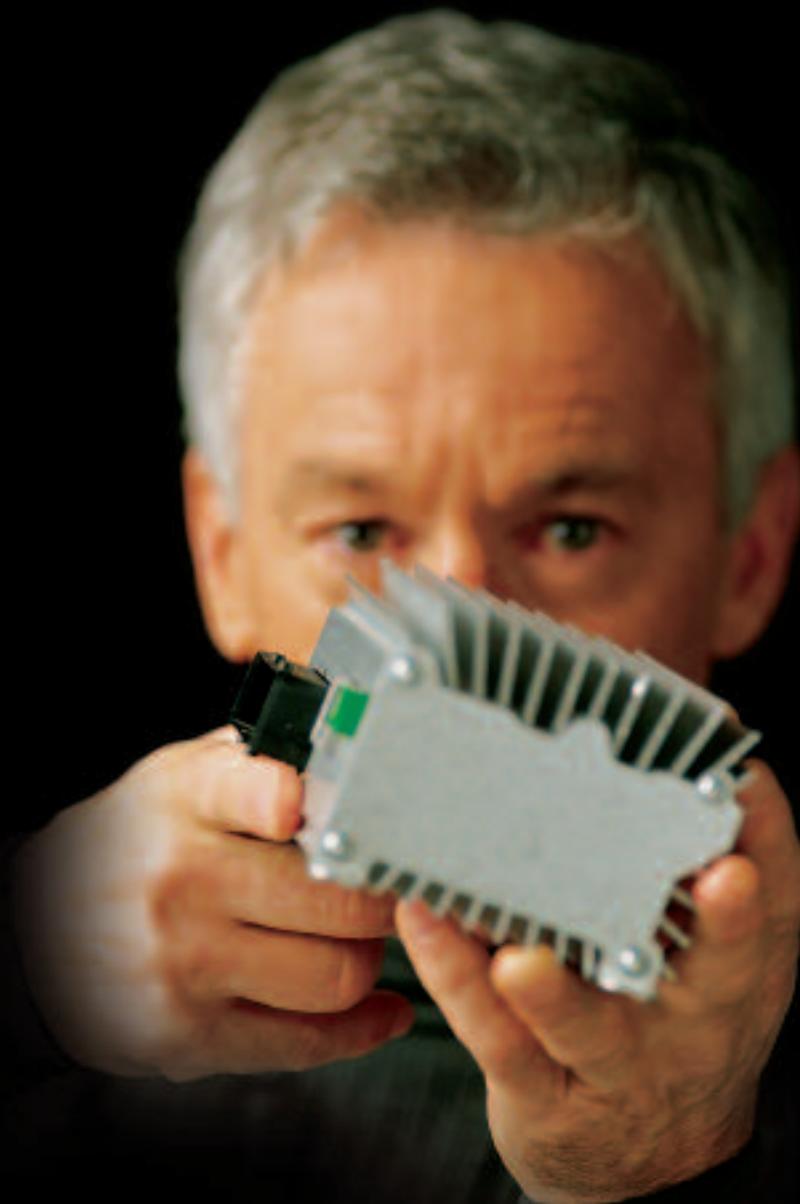
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