

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

Selling safety a 'no sell' for most coach operators

Motorcoach travel is among the safest forms of passenger transportation in North America.

So, why don't more motorcoach operators market their safety record in the same way they promote other aspects of their services or the destinations where they travel?

As a result of operators' reluctance to tout their — and the industry's — safety record, the

public impression of bus industry safety is at the mercy of the news media.

And the image of the industry created by mainstream news organizations is dominated by accident coverage — not safe travel and safety ratings. Pictures of bus accidents are often dramatic, and the victims are invariably sympathetic — elderly individuals hold-

ing their heads, children confused and bleeding, a team of harmed college baseball players, and a large extended family injured while returning from a reunion.

The negative attention a bus company — and by extension the bus industry — receives in the aftermath of an accident can be intense.

According to Randy O'Neill of

Lancer Insurance, it is unfortunate that more operators are unwilling to blow their own horn when it comes to safety.

Many operators, says O'Neill, have large investments in safety training programs, maintenance systems and technology.

And, discussing safety with a potential customer is one way to keep the conversation from being

dominated by price alone, contends O'Neill.

The old maxim, "if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is," applies to chartering a bus, as well as to anything else. But while there may be such a price for charter bus services, Matt Daecher of Daecher Consulting says "the ordinary customer is unlikely to

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Ron Cornell of ABC Cos. dies at 55

WINDERMERE, Fla. — Ron Cornell, chief executive of ABC Companies during a period of tremendous change, challenge and growth, died suddenly and unexpectedly last month, stunning his family, his company and the hundreds of people in the industry who knew him.

His death was particularly hard for those closest to Mr. Cornell because it came barely two weeks after his 55th birthday, two weeks after he remarried, and one day after the birth of his son, Lucas Reed Cornell.

The Cornell family said Mr. Cornell died in his sleep at home



The broad smile of Ron Cornell, left foreground, was widely known throughout the motorcoach industry. Mr. Cornell is shown with his brother, Dane, at an ABC Companies event three years ago.

in Windermere. The cause has not been announced and under Florida law the cause of death is not a matter of public record.

In a statement issued two days after the tragedy, the Cornell family, which has controlled ABC Companies and its predecessors since the business was founded by Clancy Cornell in 1952, announced the senior Cornell had

assumed his son Ron's role as board chairman.

At the same time, the family said ABC's senior management would provide strong support to company President and CEO Dane Cornell, the younger brother of Ron Cornell and second son of Clancy Cornell.

Ron Cornell's other son, CONTINUED ON PAGE 10 ►

Feds act... new registration system ready to rock 'n roll

WASHINGTON — Faced with a revolt by the 36 states that were members of the Single State Registration System, the federal government finally took action late last month to approve the program that will replace the SSRS.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration issued the final rule that sets the 2007 fees that bus and truck operators and other entities will pay under the new Unified Carrier Registration Agreement, successor to the Single State Registration System.

The rule was effective on the day it was issued last month.

The fees and fee structure are unchanged from those recommended to the U.S. Secretary of Transportation last spring by the UCRA board of directors.

The fees for interstate bus and truck companies, as well as others that operate commercial motor vehicles are set out in six brackets determined by the number of vehicles owned or operated by the entity subject to the fees, as reported on the Form MCS-150 last filed with FMCSA.

Entities with 0 to 2 vehicles are to pay \$39 for 2007; those with 3 to 5 pay \$116; those with 6 to 20 pay \$231; those with 21 to 100 pay \$806; those with 101 to 1,000 pay \$3,840, and those with more than 1,000 commercial motor vehicles are to pay \$37,500 for 2007.

Interstate brokers and leasing companies that do not operate motor vehicles are to pay \$39.

It's expected that states will

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UMA '20 Groups' deliver on promise of improvement

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The fledgling United Motorcoach Association 20 Group program is delivering as promised.

Bus company owners — with both large and small operations — say the program is doing just what it said it would do when it was started last year — help them better understand their businesses and

bolster their bottom lines.

"Every time I come back from a 20 Group meeting, I make changes based on something I picked up at the meeting," said Gladys Gills, whose Seattle-based Starline Transportation has become a major industry player in the Northwest.

Jim Cantrell, who operates the

much smaller Daniel's Charters in Gainesville, Ga., said the sessions have been a "real eye opener" for him and have helped him identify important areas of his business that were being overlooked and neglected.

Developed by business consultant Duane Spader of Spader Business Management in Sioux

Falls, S.D., the program involves noncompeting operators getting together in small groups several times a year to review each other's financial reports, develop benchmarks for performance and discuss ways each of them can improve. Each group has a maximum of 20 members, thus the 20 Group name.

Since it was announced in late 2005 and the first meetings involving UMA members early last year, the program has grown into five separate groups and expanded to include carriers from Trailways Transportation System, the Ontario Motor Coach Association and Gray Line.

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Bieber Tourways is buying Capitol Trailways, Rohrer

KUTZTOWN, Pa. — Bieber Tourways of Kutztown is buying Capitol Trailways and Rohrer Tour & Charter Co. of Harrisburg, in a deal that will combine three of Pennsylvania's best-known motorcoach operations.

Steve Haddad, president and CEO of Bieber Tourways, announced the deal last month; it is

expected to close within the next 30 days. Terms were not disclosed.

The two companies will be operated as subsidiaries of Bieber Tourways.

The Bieber operation was founded 75 years ago as a trucking company but was expanded by its founder, Carl R. Bieber Sr., into the bus business after World War II.

Today, the company provides charter service, plus daily line runs to New York City, Philadelphia and Atlantic City. It also offers tour packages and VIP coach services.

Two years ago, Haddad and Bieber Tourways won the United Motorcoach Association Vision Award, which is presented annually at Motorcoach Expo to a coach

company that is innovative, has an excellent safety record and exhibits strong business practices.

Haddad purchased the company from the Bieber family in 2001.

Capitol Trailways and Rohrer Tour & Charter are owned by a company called BBW Enterprises Inc., named for its three principals, Joshua 'Jot' Bennett, Skip

Becker and Joe Wrabel.

Bennett, who is company president and general manager; Becker, who is senior vice president, and Wrabel, chief financial officer, bought Capitol Trailways in 1988.

The company was founded as Capitol Bus Co. in 1936 by brothers, John and Joe Maguire. In the

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D.C. makes trip permit easier to get

WASHINGTON D.C. — The nation's capital doesn't appear ready to give up its newly enacted trip permit for charter buses, but it is making it easier for motorcoach operators to obtain one.

The District of Columbia Department of Motor Vehicles now allows operators to apply for the controversial permit online, apply for bulk permits, and get replacement permits at no extra cost if a bus with a permit breaks down.

"They became very accommodating kind of quickly," observes Ken Presley, vice president of industry relations at the United Motorcoach Association, which joined with two other trade groups to file suit against the district over the permit.

Under the trip permit measure that was adopted by the D.C. City Council earlier in

the year and became effective Aug. 1, visiting buses must display either an apportioned license tag or a short-term trip permit to operate in the district.

The permits cost \$50 and are good for six days. Bus owners can be fined up to \$500 if they do not have a permit and up to \$1,000 if they misuse it, including placing it on a different coach.

Initially, the permits were not available online and had to be purchased individually for each coach in a company's fleet. Since then, the DMV has added the online application services and bulk purchases.

The permits also were not transferable and if a breakdown occurred the operator had to buy a new permit for the replacement coach. Now, the operator can obtain a

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Operators blast Atlantic City plans

HAMMONTON, N.J. — More often than not, when government officials in New Jersey have wanted to "stick it" to motorcoach operators running buses to Atlantic City, the city's gambling parlors have been silent.

That changed last month at a public hearing on a proposal to milk more money out of operators who send coach loads of gamblers to Atlantic City.

Spokespeople representing five of the city's casinos came out to support the bus operators, who not only strongly criticized the proposed changes but said they would start taking their customers to gambling venues in other states if the changes are adopted.

The proposed changes to the bus medalion system operated by the South Jersey

Transportation Authority, along with new traffic rules for buses driving into Atlantic City, come at a time when the city's casinos are facing their first annual revenue decline in history.

Some of the casinos appear worried that more bus companies may haul their passengers to gaming operations in Pennsylvania, Connecticut and New York. And that's exactly what operators warned would happen if the transportation authority goes ahead with its plan to revise the bus fee system and routing rules.

Frank Gibbens, terminal manager for industry giant Academy Bus, said the \$48,000 his company pays for bus permits would increase by at least \$5,000 under the proposed changes.

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Proposed driver training rule awaits White House review

WASHINGTON — The days of obtaining a CDL without ever getting behind the wheel of a commercial bus or truck may be coming to an end.

Last month, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration submitted a notice of proposed rulemaking on minimum driver training requirements for review by the White House Office of Management and Budget.

The rulemaking is a result of a decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. The December 2005 decision sent the minimum training requirements for entry-level drivers back to the agency because it did not require any time behind the wheel.

While it is believed the new rule drafted by the FMCSA will

mandate behind-the-wheel training as part of the commercial driver license requirements for entry-level commercial motor vehicle drivers, the details of the proposal will not be released until the White House OMB completes its review and the FMCSA publishes the rulemaking in the Federal Register.

Current regulations, adopted in May 2004, require only classroom education and in only four areas: medical qualification and drug and alcohol testing, hours-of-service rules, wellness, and whistleblower protection. The Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety challenged those regulations, saying FMCSA ignored its own earlier recommendations about the need for more rigorous minimum training standards.

FMCSA issues new guidance on recording fires in vehicles

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has taken steps to get a better handle on the issue of bus and other commercial vehicle fires.

The agency issued new guidance on the definition of "accident," and when a commercial vehicle fire is to be considered an accident for record-keeping purposes.

Fires have been included in the FMCSA definition of accidents since 1962. However, at some point when the FMCSA was simplifying regulatory text, specific references to fires were removed.

The new guidance clarifies that

a fire or explosion in a commercial bus or truck, operating on a highway in interstate or intrastate commerce, would be considered an "accident" if it resulted in a fatality, bodily injuries requiring immediate medical attention away from the scene, or disabling damage requiring a vehicle to be towed.

The guidance applies to both collision and non-collision incidents.

Any commercial vehicle fire that meets the definition is a recordable accident that must be recorded in a company's accident register, and will be considered in the safety fitness determination.

PennDOT uses database to recruit drivers

HARRISBURG, Pa. — The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation has created a stir by using its commercial driver license records to solicit applications for seasonal job vacancies.

A state lawmaker wants officials to end the practice, saying it gives the state an unfair recruiting advantage over private employers.

The department mailed recruiting fliers to 100,000 drivers who were randomly selected from a database of more than 421,000 commercial driver license holders, spokesman Rich Kirkpatrick confirmed.

PennDOT is trying to fill roughly 500 openings in five metro areas where the fliers were mailed — primarily for snowplow operators — and state law permits the use of information in the driver database, Kirkpatrick said.

"We've just had an ongoing challenge filling these very critical winter service positions," said Kirkpatrick. "Our pay scales tend to be below what private industry can pay."

Kirkpatrick did not know how many people applied or were hired, but said the department was pleased with the response. You think?

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 provide the service. UMA urges appropriate operators to take the time to respond to these notices.

Mendocino County, Calif. Deadline: Sept. 13, 2007. Write to: Bruce Richard, General Manager, Mendocino Transit Authority, 241 Plant Rd., Ukiah, CA 95482. Phone: (707) 462-57655.

Richmond, Va. Deadline: Sept. 15, 2007. Write to: John M. Lewis Jr., Chief Executive Officer, GRTC Transit System, 101 S. Davis Ave., Richmond, VA 23220. Phone: (804) 358-4782.

Orlando, Fla. Deadline: Sept. 21, 2007. Write to: Central Florida Regional Transportation Authority, LYNX Transportation Dept., Attn. Community Service Administrator, 1200 W. South St., Orlando, FL 32805. Phone: (407) 841-5969.

Schuylkill County, Pa. Deadline: Sept. 22, 2007. Write to: Mike Mieko, Vice President for Public Transportation Services, Schuylkill Transportation System, P.O. Box 67, St. Clair, PA 17970. Phone: (570) 429-2701.

Scioto County, Ohio. Deadline: Nov. 12, 2007. Write to: Larry Mullins, ASC Coordinator, 601 8th St., Portsmouth, OH 45662. Phone: (740) 353-5626. Ext. 208.

Virginia upgrades its 511 info service

RICHMOND, Va. — The Virginia Department of Transportation has upgraded the state 511 traffic-information service.

Commercial drivers and motorists in Virginia can dial 511 for information about road conditions, construction delays and other incidents that will affect travel.

The upgrade includes:

- Improved voice-recognition software.
- Easier navigation to the most popular features.

Those calling from out of state can access Virginia 511 via a new toll-free number, (866) 695-1182.

Virginia launched its 511 system statewide in 2005, after pilot testing in the Shenandoah Valley.

Audit says cross-border inspections of Mexican buses needs more work

WASHINGTON — A new audit of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's Mexican border inspection program has turned up more problems in the agency's monitoring of bus safety.

The most recent report card was issued last month by the U.S. Department of Transportation Office of Inspector General. It is the third such audit in the past five years of the FMCSA implementation of North American Free Trade Agreement cross-border commercial vehicle provisions.

The audits are required by the 2002 transportation appropriations legislation. In the latest follow-up audit released last month, the OIG said the agency had made progress, but it also identified two serious new problems.

"Despite the progress FMCSA has made, additional improvements are needed in two of the eight... criteria," said Madeline M. Chulumovich, director of Congressional and public affairs at the OIG.

"These involve improving the quality of the data used to monitor Mexican commercial driver traffic convictions in the United States, and ensuring adequate capacity to inspect Mexican buses. FMCSA concurred with our recommendations and proposed responsive corrective actions," said Chulumovich.

When OIG inspectors looked at cross-border bus inspection operations, they found facilities — specifically mentioning the bus inspection facility in Laredo, Texas — as being short on both physical facilities and inspectors.

The OIG directed FMCSA to provide adequate inspector coverage during holidays or other periods of peak bus traffic, and it said the FMCSA should talk to its own staff periodically to determine the effectiveness of the agency's bus inspection plan.

Each month, an average of 3,000 Mexican buses crosses the U.S.-Mexico border at Laredo, Texas, or roughly 100 daily. Even more cross during holiday periods.

Since its inception in 2002 as Travel Shenandoah, 511 Virginia has received 3.7 million calls and 1.4 million visits to its website,

As a result of space and manpower limits, the Mexican buses aren't being adequately checked, especially during high-volume traffic periods, according to the audit report.

"This concern needs to be addressed to ensure that Mexican bus carriers granted long-haul authority are not able to avoid vehicle or license inspections during busy periods at this crossing," said the report.

OIG inspectors also discovered during their conversations with inspectors that the Laredo crossing doesn't even have a ramp so inspectors can check under coaches coming across the border.

In its response to the audit, the FMCSA said it will modify its Texas Commercial Bus Inspection Plan by the end of the year to address the audit concerns, and work with the Texas Department of Public Safety and U.S. Customs and Border Protection to assure adequate coverage of the Laredo border crossing.

The OIG pointed to another key area of concern: the adequacy of the FMCSA focus on Mexican carrier drug and alcohol testing issues.

And, in a parting shot, the audit questioned whether the FMCSA could live up to its assertion that "every truck that crosses the border as part of (a proposed pilot program) will be checked — every truck, every time."

"Our observations at the Laredo crossing...confirmed the challenge FMCSA faces in screening (Mexican commercial vehicles)," the audit states.

"Specifically, we observed hundreds of vehicles entering the United States at the Laredo crossing each day. FMCSA inspectors selected vehicles for inspection from the line of trucks waiting to cross the border. However, once an inspector selected a vehicle and diverted it for an inspection, no FMCSA personnel remained at the screening point to monitor carrier traffic."

www.511Virginia.org, where all the same information is displayed.

Virginia is one of roughly 30 states offering a 511 system.

UMA challenges license, fees adopted by Galveston port

GALVESTON, Texas — The legality of a new “user license” and related fees adopted by the Port of Galveston is being challenged by the United Motorcoach Association.

Not only do the license and fees violate federal law but they also discriminate against small motorcoach operators that only send a few buses annually to the port, says the association.

The port-use permit and accompanying fees were adopted this past spring and went into effect in July.

There is an initial license application fee of \$250, an annual renewal fee of \$50, a \$10 per vehicle decal fee, and a \$50 access fee per trip for all commercial vehicles having a capacity of 15 or more passengers. Vans, limousines and taxis are assessed a smaller access fees.

It appears the port may have adopted the rules and fees without researching whether those applying to charter buses might violate federal law.

Nine years ago, Congress adopted legislation that prohibits states and political subdivisions of states from enacting or enforcing any law, rule, regulation, standard or other provision that regulates companies that are licensed by the federal government to provide interstate or intrastate transportation.

States and local political subdivisions can only regulate safety, set weight limits on their roads and

No highway-use tax increase in North Carolina

RALEIGH, N.C. — North Carolina’s legislature adjourned last month without raising the state highway-use (sales) tax on motor vehicles.

The tax is levied when a North Carolina title is obtained for a vehicle, and is imposed at 3 percent of the vehicle’s retail value. However, it is capped at \$1,000 for buses and over-the-road trucks.

This year’s legislature seriously considered raising or eliminating the cap for heavy vehicles and raising the rate of the tax to 6 percent. There was even talk at one point of extending the tax to vehicles based but not registered in the state.

However, none of that happened and the legislature went home without taking action on any of the proposals.

bridges, and establish insurance requirements.

In a letter to the port, Ken Presley, vice president of industry relations at UMA, said the port’s new rules “violate federal law by requiring interstate and intrastate passenger carriers to submit an application for consideration of a license.

Any fees, charges or monetary considerations associated with the offending requirements (also) violate federal law,” said Presley.

Additionally, the imposition and manner of the fees “is unfairly burdensome to some charter bus operators as they will not be in a position to distribute the fees in any

equal manner because the number of trips annually and the number of passengers per vehicle will vary greatly,” said Presley. “This creates an unfair advantage for some carriers and is strictly prohibited by federal law.”

Presley requested the port withdraw that portion of its rules and

regulations that apply to charter bus operators.

The Port of Galveston is the year-round homeport to two Carnival Cruise Line vessels. Royal Caribbean International offered 7-day sailings through last month, and will begin a new cruise schedule in December.



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20 Groups

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

A sixth group — 20 Group Lite — recently was formed using a new concept that allows members to meet by telephone or video conferencing rather than in person. The new group allows smaller companies to take part without the expense of travel to meeting sites for the regular three-day sessions.

“The UMA groups are doing extremely well, especially for a new industry, and we’re tremendously pleased having so many groups” noted Spader, adding that it usually takes several years for a new industry to reach five or six groups.

Operators involved in the program say they, too, have been pleased with how well the programs have been going and how valuable the benchmarking and exchange of critical information have been to them.

“Whenever I receive our monthly reports, I pour over them looking for anything that can help my business,” said Dave Bolin of New World Tours, an East Coast operator based in Barstow, Va.

He said he’s been surprised at

how much more he has learned about his own business since joining the initial 20 Group early last year. “Sometimes I feel like the biggest idiot in the group,” he confessed.

Among the key lessons he has learned was that his financial ratios were off from those of most other companies, a discovery that has led him to increase prices and reduce expenses so they are closer to the industry norm.

Eye openers

In addition, he discovered he was not doing a good enough job at marketing his business and his long-time policy of turning over his coaches every three years might not be best for his company because it inflates his fixed rate.

“If the market doesn’t support changing out the fleet as often as we have been doing, then we’ll have to start keeping our coaches a little longer,” he said, stressing that he’ll be reviewing the situation regularly rather than simply buy new coaches according to the calendar.

Bolin said that while the meetings confirmed he is a decent salesman, they also revealed he lacked important marketing skills.

“I found out I was very good at sales, but not good at all at marketing, advertising and just promoting my business,” he said. “While we’re working at it now, we’re still not sure what we’re doing in the marketing area so it will take time for our company to improve.”

A surprise to him, he said, was discovering that the most successful companies in his group were not just excellent at several key categories of their businesses, but they were outstanding at all of them. “In my case, we were overdeveloped in some areas and underdeveloped in others, so in three to five years I have to discipline myself and my employees so the company gets better,” he said.

For Gills, who co-chaired UMA’s initial 20 Group and now chairs a second group, the learning came quickly and the subject involved one that keeps a lot of motorcoach operators up at night — price increases.

“Early on we realized that raising our rates even at the risk of losing some customers actually worked,” she said. “I found out we could make just as much revenue operating fewer buses, and with a shortage of drivers and mechanics, that makes a lot of sense.”

She said her fears of increased prices were alleviated in part by realizing that bus brokers charge about \$1,000 more than most carriers, convincing her there really are plenty of customers out there who are willing to pay higher prices.

Smarter decisions

“But it is a real gamble if you don’t know how it impacts your bottom line,” she cautioned, noting that the 20 Group program gives operators the opportunity to study before they act.

Gills said the meetings also have made it possible for operators to scrutinize their operations by providing them with benchmarks and other valuable tools. “People get so caught up in working their businesses they don’t have any real scrutiny and they go for years without any,” she explained. “You can’t really scrutinize your business if you don’t have any measures.”

Cantrell said his 20 Group experiences have helped him get better control of his business by clearly demonstrating that his product was under priced and the importance of offering outstanding customer service.

“I found just how under priced we really were,” he said. “We were at 1 to 3 percent margin and that was not good enough, so we instantly increased our prices.”

He said a review of how other carriers operated emphasized the importance of customer service and led to his creating a special point system that pays his drivers a cash bonus for the number of compliments and driver requests they get from customers each month. “We turned all of our drivers into sales people,” he added.

Cantrell said he also thought his utilization was good, but after analyzing all of the numbers worked up at the meetings he realized there was considerable room for improvement.

“We thought we were at 60 or 65 percent, but found out we actually were around 50 percent,” he said. “If all of our buses are on the road one day, we think we’re doing good, but then we forget about the two days earlier in the week when they were sitting on the lot. That’s what happens if you don’t track their use.”

UMA members interested in joining the 20 Group program should call Spader executive Jim Treinen at (800) 772-3377.

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Selling safety

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know what that is.”

Other operators in the area may have a pretty good idea that someone is charging a price that will just keep a cut-rate operator's buses moving, but it is not knowledge that would filter down to a potential customer.

According to Daecher, the companies that market safety generally do it through a Website. “They are usually more proactive about promoting their business, rather than just sitting around waiting for the phone to ring.”

And, he notes, they are probably more expensive.

Safety: A lack of interest

One problem with advertising safety in the bus industry, say experts, is that an operator can't just put safety ratings out there for the public to see and draw their own conclusions. You have to convince the customer that it is necessary to investigate the safety ratings of other operators and teach them what to look for.

One operator who evaluated his Website usage was disappointed to discover that the safety pages got relatively few hits when compared to other pages.

His conclusion: There is a public expectation that if the coaches weren't safe they would be taken off the road.

Autumn Brown of Dan Dipert Coaches acknowledges this problem.

The public expects certain things of a regulated industry, she says. “When you call an airline to buy a ticket, you don't ask about their safety rating.”

Therefore, Brown uses her Website to take customers through the process that will help them make a good decision. “When peo-

ple don't know what to ask, the only question they have is price,” she observes.

Brown is reluctant to put prices on the Internet. The Dan Dipert Coaches' Website mirrors the sales process, and when a customer is on the phone, they are invited to go to www.dandipertcoaches.com and follow along with the sales presentation.

Among the safety features that Dan Dipert does emphasize are FMCSA ratings, insurance, maintenance, training and especially drivers. Brown often says “the most valuable piece of safety equipment you have on that bus is the driver.”

Taking time with customers

No one agrees with that statement more than Mark Monroe, owner-operator of Country Coach in Warrenton, Va. The foundation of Monroe's company is his reputation. He is a two-million-mile driver with experience in limousine and bus operations, as well as trucking.

Monroe's Website makes a safety pitch, but Monroe believes it is the conversation he has with the customer on the phone, as well as his conduct as a driver, that makes the sale and keeps the customer returning.

Monroe is willing to take the time on the phone to explain the things a customer needs to know about motorcoach safety, like hours-of-service rules.

As a one-bus company, Country Coach is often booked when customers call.

Monroe seldom subcontracts, but even if he is booked he will take the time to assist a customer. When he refers a customer to another company, he invites them to call back if they have any questions even after they book with

someone else.

Monroe carries his safety message through once the trip is underway. He pampers his coach and he takes good care of himself. He believes driving is a profession, and he reflects this in his actions, as well as in his appearance.

He says he's often asked to participate in the activities of a charter group, but he reminds them that when they are done enjoying themselves, he will be driving the bus. He says customers appreciate this thoughtfulness, and it is one of the things they remember about their experience with Country Coach.

Schooling from Schoolman

Bill Schoolman of Classic Transportation in Bohemia, N.Y., says he welcomes the question: “Why are your prices high?”

He says it is his opportunity to make his argument and to convert a customer who might not have thought about the safety issue. To reinforce his point, he will sometimes invite a customer to pay a visit to his operation.

Classic Transportation was the first motorcoach company in the country to invest in DriveCam, the video recording system that Schoolman credits with proving his company was not liable in a serious crash last year.

Schoolman takes every opportunity to spread the word about the benefits of augmenting driver training with the video safety technology, including a link on his Website (www.classictrans.com) to the *Good Morning America* coverage of the accident involving his company in 2006.

And, he's equally grateful for the insurance savings he credits to this technology as well.

Safety may not sell but it certainly can save.

D.C. newsletter says Sodrel may run again for Congress

NEW ALBANY, Ind. — Former Congressman and former motorcoach operator Mike Sodrel may be gearing up from another race for Congress, according to Congressional Quarterly.

The respected nonpartisan political publication says Sodrel is “widely expected” to face off for the fourth time against Baron Hill, the man who beat him in 2006 and 2002. Sodrel beat Hill in 2004.

Because of their three previous contests, Congressional Quarterly says Hill and Sodrel probably know each other as well as any two political rivals in the country. They've been battling over the same swath of southern Indiana real estate for all of this decade.

Hill, the Democrat, won their third contest last fall by 10,000 votes. In 2004, Sodrel won by 1,400 votes, aided in part by President Bush running for reelection and taking 59 percent of the district vote. Two years before, Hill had won a third House term by 9,500 votes.

Sodrel was a GOP hero in the '04 election because he was the only House Republican candidate in the nation to unseat an incumbent Democrat.

Now, halfway through the first year of his fourth term, Hill is being targeted again as one of the

most vulnerable Democratic incumbents in the country.

“Sodrel is widely expected to run for a fourth time in 2008, when the most reliably ‘red’ state in the Midwest will be predicted to vote Republican in an 11th consecutive presidential election — although numerous political observers who are familiar with politics in southeastern Indiana say he may not announce until next February, after the presidential primaries shake out,” Congressional Quarterly reported.

There are a lot of people desiring another Sodrel run, according to Dave Matthews, the GOP chairman of Floyd County, which includes Sodrel's hometown of New Albany.

Sodrel has plenty of name recognition and he has demonstrated a willingness to spend his own money on his races. He has donated nearly \$1.75 million to his own campaigns since 2002.

Hill already is building cash for his next run, with \$544,000 on hand at the end of June, nearly twice what he had at this point four years ago, the last time he was running as an incumbent.

Before being elected to Congress, Sodrel headed The Free Enterprise System, a large motorcoach operation he founded in Jeffersonville, Ind.

Calendar

SEPTEMBER 2007

15-19 South Central Motorcoach Association Annual Meeting and Marketplace, Marriott Hotel, Baton Rouge, La. Info: www.southcentralmotorcoach.org.

28-Oct. 1 Virginia Motorcoach Association Annual Convention, Music Road Hotel, Pigeon Forge, Tenn. Info: Go to www.vamotorcoach.com or call (434) 376-1150.

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Ron Cornell

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Roman, is vice president and general manager of the ABC facility in Winter Garden, Fla.

ABC's vice president of marketing, Brenda Borwege, told an Orlando newspaper that Mr. Cornell's unexpected death had caused an outpouring of grief among the company's 350 employees.

The surprise and sorrow spread beyond the company, as well.

Typical were the comments of Jimmy Mears, executive vice president of Mears Transportation Group of Orlando, one of the largest ground passenger transportation companies in the southeastern U.S.:

"We were all shocked and saddened by the sudden passing of Ron Cornell. Over the past 10 years we have purchased more than 160 buses from ABC Companies and are currently working on another sizable transaction.

"From our first meeting... to our most recent meeting on August 7th, Ron and his entire team have always delivered what they promised and demonstrated great integrity in all aspects of our relationship.

"Ron was not only a successful businessperson but also a warm and fun individual. Dinner with Ron was always a treat and I made sure to take advantage of those opportunities whenever possible. All of us at Mears have many wonderful memories of times spent with Ron. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the Cornell family and all the dedicated ABC employees," said Mears.

Others share view

Similar sentiments were expressed by other operators.

Don Dinger of Gotta Go Express Trailways in Fort Worth, Texas, said he would miss Mr. Cornell "greatly." Dinger was one of a group of ABC customers and friends of Mr. Cornell who shared his passion for riding motorcycles.

The riders would sometimes rendezvous at Mr. Cornell's former vacation home in Telluride, Colo., and set off on excursions that often included the Mecca for motorcycle aficionados, Sturgis, S.D. "I'll miss our Harley rides," said Dinger.

An operator who will particularly miss Mr. Cornell is Tom Ready of Ready Bus Line in LaCrescent, Minn., who knew Mr. Cornell for nearly all of the 37 years he was employed in the motorcoach industry.

"Ron was a friend of mine for over 30 years," said Ready. "I can remember seeing him come out of

the paint booth in Faribault (Minn.) covered with paint and a smile on his face. He was always there to help the customer anytime. Not many executives have made themselves available 24/7 like Ron did," said Ready.

"And most important was his care for a customer's family. He, Roman, myself and my son were on a fishing trip. My son got sick so Ron insisted that we leave now and get home so my son could get to a hospital. He also kept in contact until he got home. He was a great friend and business man. He will really be missed by the Ready family."

Industry impact

Mr. Cornell's absence also will be particularly noticed by industry trade groups, at major events, and among ancillary organizations.

He was a director of both the American Bus Association and the Trailways Transportation System.

"Ron Cornell had served on the Trailways board of directors since 2000, and was an active member of Team Trailways since 1997," said Trailways President and CEO Gale C. Ellsworth. "Ron possessed a quiet, calm demeanor; yet used a proactive leadership style to implement his contemporary visions. His keen industry perspectives were generally expressed with humility supported by a genuine smile. His passing leaves a void at ABC Companies, our industry and particularly in Trailways," said Ellsworth.

The ABA, where Mr. Cornell had been a director since 2002, noted he "was well known throughout the motorcoach industry for his stoic leadership of one of the industry's leading commercial bus distributors, as well as for his dedicated commitment and valued contributions to numerous industry events."

One of those events was Motorcoach Expo, where his broad smile, strong good looks and deal-making skills were on display year after year.

"Ron was truly an industry leader with a big heart," said Victor

Parra, president and CEO of the United Motorcoach Association, which annually conducts Motorcoach Expo. "He helped many operators during the difficult times our industry suffered through during the weeks and months following 9/11. He will be missed by all."

Mr. Cornell also was a generous contributor to the Museum of Bus Transportation in Hershey, Pa. and the Greyhound Bus Museum in Hibbing, Minn.

The ABC years

But it is at ABC Companies where Mr. Cornell's professional absence will be most apparent.

He joined his father's Faribault Bus Co. right out of Faribault Senior High School in 1970. Two years later, Clancy Cornell launched ABC Bus, selling and servicing used motorcoaches. From 1975 until 1984, Ron Cornell managed ABC Bus in Faribault.

In '84, Mr. Cornell moved to New Jersey to open the company's newest location — its fourth regional branch. A year later, he was named president of ABC Bus.

It was during the next dozen or so years that Mr. Cornell established a national presence in the motorcoach industry.

In 1998, Mr. Cornell was named president and CEO of the parent business, ABC Bus Cos. He held that position for eight years, until April last year, when he succeeded his father as chairman. By that time, the company name had been streamlined to ABC Companies.

The period when Mr. Cornell was president and CEO was one of the most tumultuous in the company history. The industry and the company went from the boom years of the late 1990s, to the tragedy of 9/11, to the very tough aftermath and slow recovery of the first half of this decade.

During the period, ABC diversified its product offerings, introducing both a new full-size Van Hool coach — the C2000 series, and a midsize bus, the ABC M1000 series. It also diversified its power-train options to include both Caterpillar and ZF.

Ala. operator in fatal crash loses authority

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — A small Alabama coach operator that was involved in a fatal crash in Kentucky in June has lost its operating authority.

A compliance review by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration after the accident found problems that resulted in C&R Tours Inc. receiving an unsatisfactory rating and losing its operating authority, said a spokes-

woman for the agency. (See Aug. 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

The company did not fix the problems turned up during the compliance review as required within 45 days, resulting in the loss of its operating permit, the spokeswoman noted.

The FMCSA has not released its specific findings about the company.

A spokesman for the Alabama

ABC launches eco-initiative with TD925 Van Hool coach

FARIBAULT, Minn. — ABC Companies has begun selling the new Van Hool TD925 double-decker coach as part of a "green"-oriented marketing initiative.

The TD925 is the same double-decker coach being purchased by Coach USA for some of the Midwest routes operated by its megabus.com intercity service. (See Aug. 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

ABC said the TD925 is the first in a series of new bus products that are more environmentally friendly. With seating for up to 83 passengers, the double-decker Van Hool intercity commuter coach accommodates 26 more riders than a typical 2007 45-foot coach, yet emits essentially the same level of emissions.

"Plans are on the table to roll-out a 'green'-powered equipment line offering eco-friendly features, such as hybrid electric (drive), with the potential to reduce emissions, petroleum dependence and noise pollution,"

ABC said. It did not elaborate. The TD925 is an Americanized version of a coach Van Hool builds for European and other markets. ABC plans to unveil its demo models of the coach later this year and is taking orders now for the second quarter of 2008.

"We are tremendously excited about this new product," said Dane Cornell, president and CEO of ABC Companies. "By pushing the innovation envelope, we plan to offer our customers dynamic technology driven products, while leading the charge for more environmentally responsible transport solutions. We think the market is overdue for a high-capacity, lower-emissions solution that drives real business benefits to operators, communities and our environment."

Two years ago, ABC and Van Hool launched their first environmentally focused project in the U.S. when they sold fuel-cell powered transit buses to AC Transit of Oakland, Calif.

his big brother was considered more of a risk taker and deal maker. And although he retired from day-to-day management at ABC Companies nearly a decade ago, Clancy Cornell has remained involved — sometimes consulting, other times blessing deals, and on occasion stepping in and exerting moral suasion or leadership.

Life as an adventure
In his personal life, Ron Cornell was very much an outdoorsman and adventurer. He enjoyed skiing, fishing, boating, hunting, snowmobiling and riding his Harley. He also was an avid traveler. He, family and friends had visited Iceland, Africa, Europe, China, Hawaii and much of the U.S. In July, he married Elizabeth Hartter, a meteorologist for CBS in Orlando, and their son, Lucas, was born Aug. 9. Mr. Cornell's daughter, Ryhan, recently graduated from college in California. In addition to his father, brother, widow, sons and daughter, Mr. Cornell is survived by his former wife, Robyn Cornell, and his sisters Debra and Roxanne Cornell and Jennifer Schmidt. A memorial has been established in Mr. Cornell's name with the Hazelden Foundation, c/o Silkworth Patient Aid Fund, P.O. Box 11, Center City, MN 55012.

ABC said. It did not elaborate.

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Tips for keeping buses clean, customers happy

By Dave Millhouser
ABC Companies



Dave Millhouser

It was a bit embarrassing. Two highly sophisticated bus salesmen were driving a demo to show a customer... and the coach's floor was a muddy mess.

We had a mop but no bucket or water, and were only blocks from the operator's location. At the last possible moment, Robert (he also is a clever bus salesman) spotted a parking lot with a puddle.

We dipped the mop in the puddle and flailed up and down the aisle until — voila — a clean bus.

It's a given that a bus should be clean at the beginning of any trip. But sometimes the definition of clean gets blurred. Sweeping and mopping is certainly the minimum and may well be all that can be done during busy times.

But, because cleaners work year 'round, there may be things they can do during slow periods that will make your buses more attractive to customers who spend hours in them.

The outside of your windows are cleaned every time the coach is washed, but the inside is more important. Not only do passengers get to see the dirt, they also get to touch it.

Many buses use the cabin sidewall for HVAC ducting. It's remarkable what passengers stuff down there. You might want to remove the inside panel every year and clean. Consider rewarding the cleaner who finds the most unusual object. This will be both entertaining and educational. It's likely there will be improvement in your HVAC.

You also might consider, every couple of years, cleaning the floor duct that moves the HVAC air into the sidewalls, as well as the return air duct. Both collect dirt and impede performance.

Coaches with baseboard heating offer trash the opportunity to hide both under and in the coils. Even if you can't see it, the organic stuff will not improve with age.

Short-armed cleaners have difficulty with package racks. You really do want to thoroughly clean them, regularly, or you risk infestation with roaches or mice. Neither makes a good mascot and mice will eat the foam in seat cushions.

Many operators steam clean seats annually. This improves appearance and removes organic material that draws critters.

While you're doing the seats, consider cleaning (or replacing) ceiling fabric.

You might want to regularly check, and clean, under-floor baggage areas. Any food left there will eventually make the whole coach smell, and spilled liquids will ruin expensive luggage.

Pay attention to the fuel filler.

In some cases it's close to the HVAC (which will merrily spread the smell). In any event, spilled or leaked fuel will make the bus stink. Diesel fumes are nasty and very difficult to eliminate, so check often and solve problems quickly.

One important component on a modern coach is the lavatory exhaust fan. It's not always easy to

be sure it's working but it's a key to keeping bathroom smells out of the cabin. Check it regularly. It's critical to dump the lavatory as soon as the coach returns home.

For the same reason, on longer moves, it's important that drivers service the lavatory more often than they think necessary. While they're doing that, it's not a bad

idea to sweep and mop the coach. Your best drivers are doing it, but you might mention to the others that sweeping will improve tips.

At this point you're probably wondering about a strange noise you hear in the background. It's the laughter of everyone who knows me, giggling at the thought of me writing an article on cleaning.

Please don't tell my wife.

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



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Atlantic City

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Tom Dugan, owner of Safety Bus Service in Pennsauken, N.J., expects expenses caused by the plan that would force operators to use the Atlantic City Expressway as the main route in and out of Atlantic City to cost his company an estimated \$12,000 in tolls, fuel

and bus maintenance costs.

"Costs are just prohibitive for us to do business," said Dugan, who also is president of the Greater New Jersey Motor Coach Association. "It's just easier for the companies to go to other destinations."

The prospect of higher costs, and new bus routes that would force motorcoaches use the Atlantic City Expressway instead of the

often easier to navigate Black Horse Pike and White Horse Pike, makes it "more conducive" to work with gaming operations in nearby states, said Harlen Simonson, operations manager for Hicksville, N.Y.-based Paradise Trailways.

That was not what casino company spokespeople wanted to hear.

Resorts Atlantic City "adamantly opposes" the South Jersey

Transportation Authority proposal, said Donna Ward, the gaming hall's director of sales and marketing.

"The one thing that we don't want is an authority, who has partnered with us, to make it more difficult to bring people into Atlantic City," she said.

Tim Lawry, an attorney representing Harrah's Entertainment, which runs Harrah's Atlantic City,

Showboat Casino-Hotel, Bally's Atlantic City and Caesars Atlantic City, said the South Jersey Transportation Authority plan would have a "detrimental effect."

Lawry asked the authority to delay action on the proposal for a year, until a major transportation study, in which the South Jersey Transportation Authority is participating, is completed.

Those attending the hearing last month seemed mystified the transportation authority would propose its changes at a time when winnings at Atlantic City's casinos are down.

The South Jersey Transportation Authority sets bus routes and stops in an effort to reduce congestion by controlling where buses can travel. It also charges buses a fee to operate in the city.

The authority is proposing to make the White Horse and Black Horse pikes feeder routes for the expressway. That would force bus operators to pay expressway tolls.

The SJTA also is proposing to change the way it charges for its medallions, which are fees for bus companies to operate in Atlantic City. All future medallions would be based on a \$2.80 permit fee "multiplied by the number of bus trips for the previous year or estimated for the upcoming year, whichever is greater."

Such a universal fee system would likely result in an "increase for high-volume users," the authority admits. Currently, operators can buy annual "single bus" or "fleet medallions" and escape the daily per-bus fee.

For more than 25 years, coach operators have hauled hundreds of customers to Atlantic City casinos on a daily basis, although the number of bus companies has dropped dramatically over the years.

Gambling revenue in Atlantic City has declined in six of the first seven months of this year. Analysts say it's likely the industry's annual revenue figures will decrease for the first time in its history.

Part of the decline is blamed on gaming operations in Pennsylvania and Connecticut.

There will be a second hearing Sept. 12 on the proposed changes. It will be at 10 a.m. at the South Jersey Transportation Authority Administrative Building at the Frank S. Farley Service Plaza in Hammonton.

Written comments can be submitted until Sept. 14, and should be mailed to: Wade Lawson, Deputy Executive Director, South Jersey Transportation Authority, 25 South New York Ave., Atlantic City, NJ 08401. Or, e-mail to: rrodriguez@sجتa.com.



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Young is named IMG's top operator

FRENCH LICK, Ind. — Young Transportation of Asheville, N.C., which has been around for almost 70 years, has been named International Motor Coach Group Operator of the Year.

The award was presented last month at the IMG Strategic Alliance meeting held here.

"It was an extremely difficult decision. We had many deserving companies, but in the end Young Transportation was the clear choice," said IMG Chairman Jack Wigley of All Aboard America! in Mesa, Ariz.

The award recognizes the IMG member company that "participates in industry leadership roles, promotes IMG standards regarding

safety, customer service, driver training, and practices sound business techniques."

Wigley presented the award and a proclamation to Young Transportation Chairman Ralph Young, President and CEO Tom Crouch and Executive Vice President Hank Garbee. For the award presentation, IMG added a bit of dramatic, mystery and theatrics.

A coach belonging to Young Transportation was secretly removed from the Young fleet and completely wrapped in four-color graphic showcasing famous attractions from the Asheville area and heralding the IMG award.

The wrap, designed and executed by Turbo Images, was placed on

the coach at the facilities of IMG member The Free Enterprise System in Jeffersonville, Ind., and then driven to French Lick.

During the award ceremony, sponsored by ABC Companies, the coach was pulled into the room to the amazement of the entire delegation from Young Transportation.

"It is quite an honor for Young Transportation to be selected for this award and to be recognized nationally by the premier travel companies of IMG," said Crouch. "Our involvement and commitment to the programs offered by IMG has played a key role in the growth of our company."

Young Transportation traces its roots as a bus company to 1939



From left, Hank Garbee, Ralph Young and Tom Crouch of Young Transportation display their IMG awards and the coach that was wrapped by Turbo Images to mark the honor.

when T. Ralph Young Sr., created a new service, Asheville-Elk Mountain Bus Line.

Upon the death of Mr. Young in 1960, his son Ralph T. Young purchased the business and diversified

the company into charter, tours and school transportation for Asheville.

Today, Young has 100 employees and operates a diverse fleet of more than 40 vehicles, including motorcoaches and midsize buses.

MCI sponsors second tour to promote 'green' coach travel

WASHINGTON — Motor Coach Industries is helping sponsor another cross-country energy awareness program as part of its ongoing marketing campaign to promote motorcoaches as an energy efficient way to travel

The 2007 ENERGY STAR Change a Light Bus Tour, a program organized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, will promote energy efficiency among

students, teachers, community leaders and ordinary citizens.

The bus tour kicks off Oct. 3, ENERGY STAR Change a Light Day, and travels coast to coast, stopping for events in 10 major cities during the 20-day trip.

The goal is to educate the public about the importance of choosing Energy Star-qualified lighting as a first step toward energy efficiency, and encourage individuals

to commit to change at least one light in their homes to an Energy Star-qualified light.

Program participants will ride in an MCI J4500 LX motorcoach equipped with a 2007 clean-diesel Caterpillar engine.

The same coach was used earlier this summer for the Udall Legacy Tour, which took 13 young environmental scholars on a 54-day, cross-country eco-journey,

covering 8,606 miles. That tour highlighted innovative environmental activities in 26 cities, plus 6 national parks and 6 Native American communities. It concluded last month in Tucson, Ariz.

"We not only want to win over the environmentally conscientious, we want people to know how luxurious it can be traveling by motorcoach," said Patricia Ziska, MCI vice president and chief customer

officer.

The dozens of people visiting the MCI coach and its education center during the tours will see the comfort that's possible while traveling in an upscale coach.

"Passengers can sit back and relax, work on their computers, watch the news or whatever, and they're in a much more comfortable environment than their car," said Ziska.

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Registration

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

begin implementing the new system in a matter of weeks.

When the Single State Registration System died at the first of the year, the Unified Carrier Registration System had not yet been implemented, so the 36 states that are members of the SSRS lost the millions of dollars in revenue generated by the program.

That money is used to fund a number of programs but primarily helps pay for state commercial vehicle safety efforts. All but three of the states received more than \$1 million annually, with Michigan getting more than \$7.5 million, and more than two-thirds of the states getting more than \$2 million each.

This summer, the states began screaming at Congress and USDOT policymakers to get in

gear and get the Unified Carrier Registration System approved and moving. Last month, Congress passed a law that gave USDOT until Sept. 1 to approve the new fees or states would be allowed to resurrect the SSRS. (See Aug. 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

The Bush Administration acted and got the rule with the UCRA fees out the door before the deadline.

The process and timetable to be used by states to implement the Unified Carrier Registration System is expected to vary, but the administration of the program is likely to be fairly uniform nationwide.

Like SSRS, UCRA is a base-state system, and bus and truck operators will pay their fees through their base state. Operators subject to UCRA may expect to receive a notice from their base

state within the next few weeks outlining the program and fees and explaining what they need to do to register for UCRA and how to pay the fees for 2007.

It's expected UCRA registration and payment of fees may be accomplished on-line through a single national Web-based system developed and hosted by the Indiana Department of Revenue on behalf of all the participating UCRA states.

The system could be ready for business about the middle of this month.

If an operator prefers, it will be able to register and pay its fees directly to its base state.

The *Federal Register* notice announcing the new system can be found at: <http://a257.g.akamai.net/7/257/2422/01jan20071800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2007/E7-16482.htm>.

Bieber

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

1950s, Capitol Bus became a member of the National Trailways Bus System (now Trailways Transportation System) and changed its name to Capitol Trailways of Pennsylvania.

In the 1960s and 70s, the company was managed by Dick Maguire, who became a widely known bus industry leader.

Today, Capitol Trailways offers line-run service from Harrisburg, Hershey, Reading, Lebanon, York, Lancaster and several smaller Pennsylvania communities to New York City and Philadelphia.

It also provides charter and regularly scheduled Atlantic City service.

Six years ago, Capitol Trailways purchased the tour and charter division of Rohrer Bus Service, a large school bus operation, and created a company called Rohrer Tour & Charter, which specializes in pre-formed group tours and motorcoach transportation to group tour operators.

In a telephone interview, Haddad said the deal developed after he approached Bennett, Becker and Wrabel about a possible buyout. He said their "interest went from moderate, to 'let's get this done.'"

Currently, Capitol Trailways has a fleet of 42 motorcoaches, while Bieber operates 68. Once the two operations are merged, Haddad expects to be able to reduce the Capital Trailways fleet to 36 coaches and the Bieber fleet to 58.

At the same time, Haddad also expects to be able to upgrade line-run service to the companies' big-

DC fees

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

replacement permit at no cost by notifying the DMV of the breakdown and providing the agency information about the second bus.

"I think what they've done is take some of the sting out of the permits," says Presley.

The DMV says it makes enhancements to all of its services regularly and will continue to do so for the trip permit program as well, according to spokeswoman Janis Hazel, who notes that some improvements have been made at the suggestion of operators.

"We try to accommodate our customers on a case-by-case basis," she said, adding that the agency has delivered new permits to hotels where bus drivers whose coaches had broken down were staying.

Still, operators who frequent the district remain adamantly opposed to the trip permit, charging they are a money grab by the district and are likely to hurt the district's tourism efforts.

The improvements to the process may have been in response to suggestions made by operators in numerous e-mails and letters they sent to members of the D.C. City Council protesting the permits and the way the DMV has administrated them, according to Presley.

Councilman Jim Graham responded to operators who complained to him that he would pass along their suggestions to the DMV and would consider the entire issue when the council returns from its summer break in September.

Among those who complained was George R. Childers, owner of Magic Carpet Ride in Vero Beach, Fla., who worries that operators who take a last-minute tour to D.C. still may not receive their permits in time.

"I am not in favor of this permit by any stretch of the imagination," he said in an e-mail to Graham. "However, whenever a law such as this is proposed, one would think someone with a little common sense would review the

city destinations.

The Capital Trailways and Rohrer names will continue but the fleet colors will be switched from predominate red and white to the cream and green of Bieber Tourways.

Bennett, Becker and Wrabel will remain in their present positions in limited roles, Haddad said.

Elaine Farrell, executive director of the Pennsylvania Bus Association, told a Harrisburg newspa-

mechanics of the process."

Childers warned that if the issues he has with the permit process are not resolved soon, he will not allow his coaches to bring "revenue bearing visitors" into the district.

Meantime, the three partners who filed the suit against the district — UMA, the American Bus Association and the National Tour Association — have asked for a summary court judgment that would force the district to abandon the trip permit legislation.

"We wanted to cut right to the chase because we think we have an open and shut case," said Victor Para, UMA president and chief executive.

He maintains the trip permit violates federal interstate commerce regulations, and the requirement that operators purchase apportioned tags if they do not obtain a permit violates International Registration Plan rules.

The IRP, which governs licensing for commercial vehicles that travel in multiple states or jurisdictions, exempts charter buses from having to carry apportioned tags because their interstate travel is unpredictable. Line-run buses and commercial trucks are required to have apportioned tags based on annual estimates they make of the interstate travel they expect to make.

Parra, who sits on the IRP board, said D.C. is a member of the IRP and agreed to the exemption as part of its participation in the organization. "It now can't require charter buses to have apportioned tags," he contends.

He noted, too, that the citations being issued to motorcoach operators by D.C. police actually have been for not having apportioned tags rather than for not carrying a trip permit, a move that could backfire on them.

"I think they might know the trip permit is illegal and will be thrown out by the court," he said, adding that they may have forgotten about the IRP rules.

For more information about the permit, including instructions on how to apply for one, go to <http://dmv.dc.gov/info/trippermit.shtm>.

per the acquisition will make bus service a better option for mid-state Pennsylvania residents.

"It's a good blend and it's going to expand their customer base," Farrell said. "These are two reputable companies, and the Trailways affiliation was something Haddad did not have that offers some great opportunities. I think for the customers in Harrisburg this is definitely going to be a hit," Farrell added.

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Fast processing to be tried at Peace Bridge on Sept. 9

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Is it possible the opening of the National Football League season is as important as cross-border security?

Twice during the past four years, the Ontario Motor Coach Association has tried to convince the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency and the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission to come up with a plan to speed the processing of U.S.-bound buses at Niagara River border crossings. For a variety of reasons, both attempts failed.

Now, the association has been approached by U.S. Customs and Border Protection to give it another try. And that will happen Sunday, Sept. 9, at the Peace Bridge between Buffalo and Fort Erie, Ont.

And Sunday, Sept. 9, just happens to be the regular season opening game of the Buffalo Bills NFL team.

OMCA says the one-day trial,

Canada military opts to purchase 30 Setra coaches

MISSISSAUGA, Ont. — DaimlerChrysler Commercial Buses North America has confirmed that it was awarded a standing offer to provide up to 30 Setra S 417 motorcoaches to the Canadian Department of National Defense over a three- to four-year period.

The coaches will be used to transport and service troops within Canada. Delivery of the first seven coaches is slated for December.

“We are proud the Setra S 417 coaches were selected as the vehicle of choice for the Canadian Department of National Defense,” said Patrick Scully, chief commercial officer for DCCBNA.

“Setra coaches have been used to transport troops in other parts of the world, and we are proud to be able to continue this success with Canada’s DND.”

The Setra S 417 coaches will be delivered from DCCBNA’s facility in Mississauga, where all pre-delivery work will be completed.

The 220,000-square-foot Mississauga plant is the North American production center for Orion transit buses.

It also now serves as a delivery center, parts facility and warranty service center for Setra motorcoaches.

There was a political dust-up over Setra winning the contract for the coaches over Motor Coach Industries, which has its principal plant in Manitoba. (See Aug. 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

at one crossing — the Peace Bridge, will allow U.S. Customs and Border Protection to prepare its officers and staff for the pilot event.

Peace Bridge staff also will assist by identifying participating motorcoaches and direct them to a special staging area in the Customs

and Border Protection compound where the priority processing will take place.

CPB officers will board the coaches and verify information on passenger manifests. All passengers will still be required to carry and present proper documentation.

U.S. Customs officials have told OMCA the one-day trial is restricted to charter coaches only, entering the U.S. at the Peace Bridge.

A red alert undoubtedly will be sounded if a Greyhound coach happens to stray into the wrong lane.

Passenger manifests must be faxed 24 hours in advance of arrival at the bridge. The driver must carry a copy of the manifest as well.

For more information, contact Dave Carroll of OMCA at (416) 229-6622 Ext. 230, or e-mail Dave@OMCA.com.

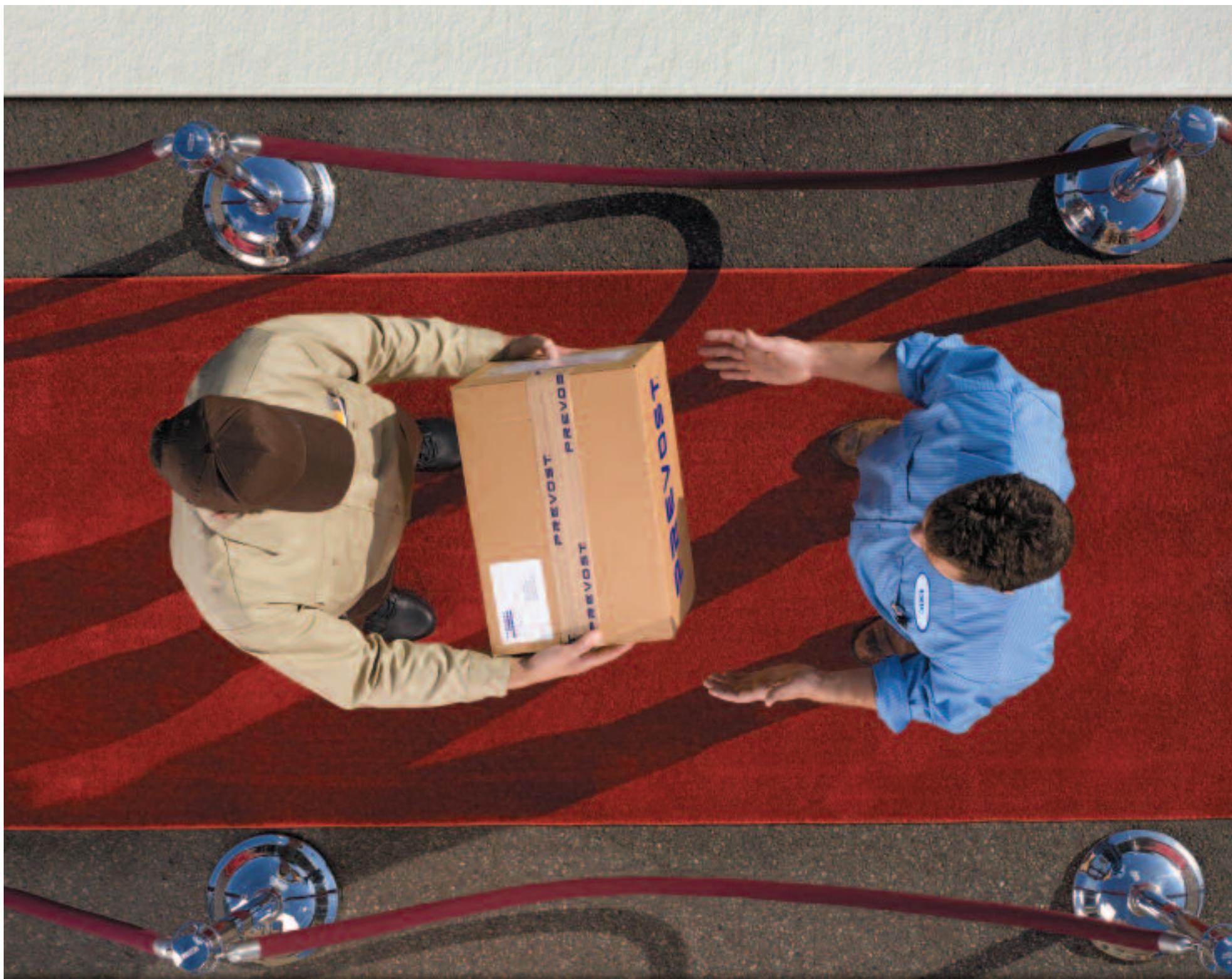
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