

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

THE NEWS RESOURCE FOR THE BUS AND MOTORCOACH INDUSTRY

Success doesn't come easy for U.S. luxury bus services

From time to time during the past 30 years, motorcoach operators in the U.S. have launched luxury commuter bus service without resounding success.

Greyhound Lines tried it and failed in New York in the mid 1970s, an experiment that discouraged a whole generation of operators from taking a chance.

Among those that have launched luxury commuter service in this decade and appear to have found success are two New York operators. They compete head-on for travelers between heavily populated commercial centers in Manhattan and the assorted bedroom and vacation towns that form the Hamptons along the eastern end of Long Island.

Hampton Luxury Lines, which was founded three years ago, makes the 100-mile, two-hour plus daily run with modified luxury coaches, while Hampton Jitney, around since 1974, has been doing it for a little more than two.

Their regular riders include mostly upscale business passengers

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Hampton Luxury Lines' coaches feature plush leather 2-by-1 seating.

LimoLiner service begins Oct. 1

BOSTON — The newest luxury motorcoach service in North America is being launched Oct. 1, with four daily trips each way between Boston and New York City.

Called LimoLiner, the service is being established by a company created this spring by a wealthy international entrepreneur and bus industry newcomer Fergus McCann of West Newton, Mass. Among other things, McCann is

the former controlling stockholder and managing director of the legendary Celtic Football Club in Glasgow, Scotland.

According to a spokeswoman, "the vision for LimoLiner came to McCann after exposure to the aggravations of domestic and international travel over many years as a tour operator and business traveler.

"He became increasingly frustrated with the poor service he often received, most recently along

the Boston-New York corridor, and developed the concept for LimoLiner — a customer-oriented company whose mission is to provide personal service to business and upscale leisure travelers at competitive costs," the spokeswoman added.

LimoLiner will begin service with a fleet of three new E4500 MCI conversion coaches outfitted with two-by-one seating and

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A difference of opinion Federal study argues for stronger industry security, operators demur

Question: How vulnerable is the motorcoach industry to terrorist and criminal attack? Answer: Too vulnerable, as most in the industry are well aware.

Question: How necessary is it to beef up industry security to deal with the potential of terrorist and criminal attacks? Answer: It depends on who you ask.

A major federal study of the vulnerability of the industry to attack argues that plans and programs need to be designed and implemented to improve coach passenger security.

However, those who were the focus of the study, motorcoach operators, are much less sanguine about the need for widespread

security measures.

That is just one of the anomalies found in the nine-month study conducted by the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center in Cambridge, Mass., the research arm of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The Volpe Center launched its "security assessment" of the coach industry in June 2002, at the behest of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. The goal was to identify the industry's areas of vulnerability and find cost-effective fixes. The study looked at the industry's existing security conditions, planning and programs, as well as

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FTA rejects loss claim but nemesis loses too The sordid saga of SunLine Transit

PALM SPRINGS, Calif. — A Southern California motorcoach operator has failed in his bid to win reimbursement for money he lost when Palm Springs' public transit agency, SunLine Transit, violated federal charter service regulations.

Bill Miller of Desert Resorts Transportation of Thousand Palms, Calif., had applied to the Federal Transit Administration for reimbursement of losses he and other coach operators suffered at the hands of SunLine.

Miller also had asked the FTA to establish a practice of withholding federal dollars when it finds a public transit agency has violated charter rules.

Miller won't be getting any money but he and members of the California Bus Association have found new solace: The general manager of SunLine Transit, Richard Cromwell III, who has been the chief nemesis of Southern California coach operators for most of the past decade, has stepped off a SunLine bus into a pit of slop.

Cromwell, sometimes known as King Richard the Third because of the transit empire he built in the desert around Palm Springs, was forced to resign in wake of allegations that SunLine violated federal funding rules, falsified documents, backdated checks, co-mingled

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THE DOCKET

Boondoggles

Government officials in three states—Oregon, Illinois and Ohio—amaze us with their creativity and stupidity.

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Tax on Payroll

Nevada adopts a new payroll tax and additional fees for businesses.

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No Tax

Minnesota Tax Court says Michigan's Single Business Tax isn't really an income tax. **Page 4**

Tax on Tires

New York imposes a tax on new tires. **Page 4**

Manáñ and Manáñ

Environmental study means Mexican buses won't be flooding into the U.S. anytime soon.

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Sale of Coach USA units in southeast get preliminary okay

WASHINGTON — Plans by investors to buy the Southeast region of Coach USA, a deal involving seven operating companies, has been given preliminary approval by the U.S. Department of Transportation Surface Transportation Board.

Final approval of the transaction depends in large measure on whether comments from the public are filed opposing the deal. Sharp opposition could trigger formal proceedings and a more critical examination by the board of the purchase plan.

The seven companies that form the Southeast region of Coach USA are being acquired from Stagecoach Group PLC of Scotland by an equity fund managed by Lincolnshire Management Inc. and by VSC Partners LLC. Both Lincolnshire and VSC are private New York investment firms and neither has a background in the motorcoach industry.

Lincolnshire owns a diverse group of companies that includes Prince Sports Inc., best known for its oversize tennis rackets; Transcraft Corp., a leading manufacturer of flatbed trailers; NextCycle Inc., a waste recovery service company that among other things processes empty plastic bottles and glass, and Riddell Sports Group, the athletic equipment maker. If you know a boy who plays high school football, he may wear a Riddell helmet.

Approval by the Surface Transportation Board and completion of the deal with Stagecoach Group will mean the seven motorcoach companies will become subsidiaries of a new company called Southeast Coach Inc.

Those companies that currently operate under the Coach USA name likely will be re-branded Southeast Coach. They cannot retain the Coach USA name.

According to documents filed with the Surface Transportation Board, here are the companies Lincolnshire and VSC are acquiring. The list includes a handful of inactive companies that come as part of the deal. Each company is listed with its headquarters city and 2002 revenues:

- America Charters Ltd., Charlotte, N.C., \$8.36 million.
- American Coach Lines Inc., Norcross, Ga., \$8.37 million.
- B&A Charter Tours Inc., Millersville, Md., no information provided; probably inactive.
- Dillon's Bus Service Inc., Millersville, Md., \$10.21 million.
- Florida Cruise Connection Inc. (dba Cruise Connection), Sarasota, Fla., \$2.7 million.
- Golden Isle Coaches of Florida Inc., Jacksonville, Fla., \$3.39 million.
- The McMahon Transportation Co., Millersville, Md., inactive.
- Midnight Sun Tours Inc., Lake Worth, Fla., \$3.68 million.
- P&S Transportation Inc., Orlando, inactive.
- Royal Tours of America Inc., Orlando, inactive.
- Southern Coach Company, Durham, N.C., \$5.58 million.
- Southern Tours Inc., Durham, N.C., inactive.
- Tippett Travel Inc. (dba Tippett Travel & Tours), Lake Worth, Fla., revenue included in Midnight Sun Tours.

According to a press statement released by Stagecoach Group when the deal was announced in July, Lincolnshire and VSC are paying \$48 million for the seven active companies.

Combined, the companies operate more than 500 vehicles, mostly motorcoaches, and employ 620 people. The deal also includes the purchase of an additional 58 vehicles, representing \$5 million of the purchase price.

'Completion of the deal will mean the seven companies will become subsidiaries of a new company called Southeast Coach Inc.'

Coach USA's Southeast region had sales of \$49.8 million in the 12 months ended April 30, with an operating profit — before goodwill amortization — of \$5.8 million.

A five-member board of directors, drawn from Lincolnshire and VSC, will oversee Southeast Coach. The board will be com-



Three of the Coach USA subsidiaries that are being sold are American Coach Lines (top), Dillon's Bus Service (middle) and Southern Coach Company.

posed of Douglas H. Bagin, a senior managing director of Lincolnshire; George J. Henry, a principal of Lincolnshire; Michael C. Lee, a senior associate of Lincolnshire; Christopher Carmel, one of the three principals of VSC, and Ottavio Serena di Lapigio, who is both a managing director of Lincolnshire and a principal of VSC. None of these individuals appear to have industry experience.

The third principal of VSC is Joseph V. Vittoria, who for 10 years

four years and his background is in mergers and acquisitions. He has an undergraduate degree from Harvard University, where he was captain of the varsity heavyweight crew team, and a MBA from the Darden Graduate School of Business Administration at the University of Virginia.

Comments opposing the Lincolnshire/VSC purchase must be filed with the Surface Transportation Board by Oct. 2. If opposing comments are filed, the board's preliminary approval will be vacated and a procedural schedule likely will be adopted to reconsider the application.

If no opposing comments are filed, the board decision will take effect automatically and become final Oct. 2. Board decisions and notices are available on its Web site: www.stb.dot.gov.

A copy of the Lincolnshire/VSC application may be obtained from its legal representative: Vincent J. Coyle Jr. of the firm of Pitney, Harden, Kipp & Szuch LLP, 685 Third Ave., New York City, NY 10017-1024.

N.J. operators push for state association

FAIRLAWN, N.J. — A new effort is under way to organize a state association of motorcoach operators in New Jersey.

Richard Jaeger of Coachman International Tours in Fairlawn said operators in New Jersey need to speak with one voice and focus on key issues affecting all of them.

"We're getting run over by the State of New Jersey," said Jaeger.

A group of New Jersey operators launched a nascent organizational drive two years ago but the effort floundered when a key leader went to work for New Jersey Transit. Jaeger thinks it's time to try again.

"They pick on buses (during inspections) but they don't enforce speeding laws," he notes. Coach operators would benefit by having their own representative in Trenton, as well as someone who can work with the state DOT and police on regulatory and enforcement issues, he said.

From time to time, New Jersey has bounded to the top of the list of states that are the most unfriendly to motorcoach operators. Despite being a leading travel destination, New Jersey invariably shoots itself in the foot with its tax policies, as well as regulatory enforcement, aimed at coach operators.

Jaeger is being joined in his effort to measure the interest of New Jersey coach operators in organizing a state association by James Vanderhoof of Vanderhoff Transportation in West Orange. Both head charter companies.

Operators interested in helping the pair organize a state association should contact Jaeger at (201) 398-9855 or Vanderhoof at (973) 325-0700.

ABA relocates office

WASHINGTON — The American Bus Association has relocated its headquarters to 700 13th Street NW, Suite 575, in Washington. The zip code is 20005-5923.

The association phone and fax numbers remain unchanged.

THE DOCKET

Officials across the U.S. amaze with their antics

Ahhhhh, the creativity and occasional stupidity of government officials is awesome to behold. We offer these examples:

- The legislature in Oregon has decided it's a good idea to tax tourists to pay for state tourism promotion. Makes sense to us.

- In Ohio, state transportation officials have asked federal taxpay- ers to cover most of the \$315,000 cost of a study aimed at figuring out why buses and trucks stopped using the Ohio Turnpike. In 1995, Ohio raised turnpike tolls 85 percent. Wanna guess why commercial vehicles stopped using the turnpike? Duh!

- And in the Land of Lincolnesque boondoggles, the state legislature has established a program designed to guarantee the profitability of air carriers willing

to serve small Illinois cities.

Yes, dear readers, these are all true examples of your government at work. Here are the details:

In Oregon, legislators completed action on a bill that will create a 1 percent statewide transient lodging tax. The estimated \$10 million that will be raised annually is to be used for tourism promotion. The tax goes into effect Jan. 1.

Under the bill, local jurisdictions in Oregon that already have transient lodging taxes will be prohibited from increasing existing hotel-motel taxes or from adopting new lodging taxes. There are a few exceptions, of course. Aren't there always?

The Oregon Department of Revenue will administer the collection of the statewide transient

tax and transfer the money to the Oregon Tourism Commission. Lodging providers will collect the tax and retain 5 percent for an administrative reimbursement. In other words, it's a win-win.

We especially like the geniuses at the Ohio Turnpike Authority and the Ohio Department of Transportation who sent a request to the Federal Highway Administration for \$250,000 to cover 80 percent of the cost of a study aimed at getting buses and trucks back onto the Ohio Turnpike (Interstate 80/90) and off secondary roads.

Since the turnpike authority boosted road fees 85 percent eight years ago, toll revenue from commercial vehicles has dropped at least 9 percent annually.

Many buses and lots of truckers

are hopping off I-80/90 at the Indiana-Ohio border and getting on State Route 20 which parallels the interstate across northern Ohio. Getting off the interstate means bus operators and truckers not only avoid the hefty tolls but truckers also skip the toll-plaza scale.

Surely there are a few unemployed NASA scientists around who can help the Ohio bureaucrats figure out how to get buses and trucks back on the turnpike.

In Illinois, legislators adopted the I-FLY Act, which ostensibly is supposed "to create, retain and stabilize reliable air service to commercial airports outside of Cook County (Chicago)." Looks like more welfare for the airline industry to us.

The law sets up a grant pro-

gram for airports and others to dole out money for recruiting and retaining air carriers. The retention program includes such bennies as guaranteeing revenue per flight, subsidizing tickets, or guaranteeing carrier profitability.

Money for the grants is to come from a variety of sources, mostly taxpayers, naturally. The state can kick in, federal largesse can be sought, local governments can pony up, and gifts will be happily accepted by the I-FLY Fund at the State Treasury.

This law should inspire the leadership of the new Illinois Motorcoach Association. Next year, they should develop the I-RIDE Act, which subsidizes bus passengers, bus companies and bus terminals — outside of Cook County, of course.

Michigan tax is no tax

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Note to Minnesota operators doing business in Michigan: The Minnesota Tax Court has ruled that Michigan's Single Business Tax is not a tax measured by or imposed on income. Therefore, it can't be credited against Minnesota income tax.

As a general rule in income taxation, the amounts of tax paid by a taxpayer to one state may be credited against the tax due from the same taxpayer to another state. But, the taxes involved must be valid income taxes.

In Michigan, the Single Business Tax substitutes for a corporate income tax, although it is often described as a sort of value-added tax. However, over the

years, there have been a number of legal challenges across the U.S., questioning whether the tax qualifies under other states' laws as creditable.

In this case, the Minnesota-resident individual taxpayers were shareholders in a Subchapter S corporation that did business in Michigan and paid the Single Business Tax. They argued that the tax was in fact an income tax, since the tax base is federal taxable income.

The Minnesota Tax Court, however, ruled that the adjustments to taxable income involved in calculating Single Business Tax liabilities are so extensive that the tax did not qualify for a credit.

New York adopts tax on tires

ALBANY, N.Y. — New York began imposing a special tax last week on the sale of new tires.

New York is just catching up with many states that have the tax, which is generally used to pay for the disposal of waste tires or to research ways of doing so more efficiently.

Beginning last Friday, the Empire State began imposing a

tax of \$2.50 per tire sold at retail. This includes tires for commercial, as well as noncommercial highway vehicles, and even those new tires sold with new and used vehicles.

Recaps are not subject to the tax, nor are tires ordered through the mail or the Internet and delivered to the buyer in New York by mail or common carrier.

Public agencies seek private charter firms

The following public transit providers have informed the United Motorcoach Association of their intent to provide charter service unless willing and able private charter operators step forward to offer their services, or to bid on contract opportunities.

The United Motorcoach Association urges operators in the following areas to take the time to respond to these public notices:

Milwaukee, Wis. Deadline: Sept. 22, 2003. Write to: General Manager, Milwaukee County Transit System, 1942 N. 17th St., Milwaukee, WI 53205-1697. Phone: (414) 344-4550.

Abilene, Texas. Deadline: Sept. 29, 2003. Write to: General Manager, CityLink, 1189 S. 2nd St., Abilene, TX 79602. Phone: (325) 676-6403.

Danville, Ill. Deadline: Sept. 30, 2003. Write to: Director, Danville Mass Transit, 101 N. Jackson St., Danville, IL 61832-4727. Phone: (217) 431-0653.

Payroll tax, new fees begin Oct. 1 in Nevada

CARSON CITY, Nev. — Bus and motorcoach companies, as well as other Nevada businesses, will be required to pay a tax equal to 0.7 percent of the total wages paid to their employees effective the first day of next month.

The percentage declines to 0.65 percent effective July 1. Financial institutions pay a higher rate, 2 percent.

The payroll tax is to be imposed on the gross annual payroll of a business, less the cost of healthcare (insurance and other medical-related costs). The existing business activity tax of \$100 per employee was repealed.

The payroll tax was one of many compromises reached during a six-month battle over Nevada's biennium state budget. The fight included two special sessions of the legislature and the governor asking the State Supreme Court to order the legislature to make a decision on the budget.

The payroll tax represents a major portion of the \$836 million in tax and fee increases adopted by the legislature to fund fast-growing Nevada's \$5 billion state budget for the next two years.

All companies doing business in Nevada also will see the following fee increases:

- Business license fee. Companies doing business in Nevada must obtain a business license from the Nevada Department of Taxation. Effective Oct. 1, the application fee for the license increases from \$25 to \$100. In addition, a new annual license fee of \$100 will be imposed.
- Secretary of State Fees. Many fees payable in connection with filing documents with the Nevada Secretary of State will increase effective Nov. 1.

A few fees will decrease, however. For example, the minimum filing fee for incorporating in Nevada will decrease from \$175 to \$75.

That means radio listeners across the western U.S. will continue to be inundated with commercials touting the advantages of incorporating in Nevada.

Long considered a tax friendly jurisdiction for business, Nevada remains so despite the new taxes and fees. The state still has no corporate income tax and no franchise tax.

Don't look now but Motorcoach Expo 2004 is coming

ATLANTA — Motorcoach Expo 2004, the only industry event devoted exclusively to fulfilling the business needs of coach operators in the areas of education, equipment, networking and legislative information is 145 days away.

One of the show's first important deadlines comes Oct. 1. That's the cut-off for getting the advanced registration discount of \$100.

The next registration deadline after that is Jan. 15, when the regular rate expires. Individuals registering between Oct. 2 and Jan. 15 will save \$50.

The 2004 Expo will be Thursday-Saturday, Feb. 8-10, at the spacious Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta.

Having Motorcoach Expo at

UMA surveys members on critical issues

WASHINGTON — The United Motorcoach Association is assessing the needs of its operators members through a survey that was sent earlier this month.

UMA's annual Industry Assessment Survey questions operators on a whole range of issues and challenges that impact their businesses. The survey questions are designed to ferret out the most pressing needs facing operators.

"The survey results will help us improve our understanding of the most pertinent and current issues affecting the industry," says UMA President & CEO Victor Parra.

Questions in the three-page survey focus on important operational, marketing, administrative and legislative/regulatory issues. Operators identify the greatest challenges they face on a daily basis.

The surveys are to be returned by Oct. 6.

As an incentive for operators to complete the survey, UMA is offering a 25 percent discount for one registration at Motorcoach Expo 2004 or on selected UMA products.

Further information about the survey can be obtained by calling Tara Sheehan, membership and marketing assistant at UMA. She can be reached by calling (800) 424-8262.

a major transportation hub like Atlanta, with its mild winter weather, virtually guarantees strong attendance. More than 1,500 motorcoach and bus operators, owners, manufacturers and



suppliers are expected to attend Expo 2004.

The Expo Web site is online. Using the Web site individuals can both register and make lodging reservations, getting the best rates

possible. For information go to www.motorcoachexpo.com.

Information on Expo also can be obtained by calling the United Motorcoach Association at: (800) 424-8262.



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INDUSTRY NEWS

Moving billboards promote Toronto, Ontario tourism

TORONTO — More than 30 motorcoaches operating between Toronto and New York City have been outfitted with graphics promoting Ontario tourism.

The \$200,000 promotional program is part of a huge campaign that is underway to boost Ontario and Toronto tourism.

The moving billboard project was announced late last month by Ontario Tourism and Recreation Minister Brian Coburn and representatives of the province's coach tourism industry.

"This partnership between our industry and the government has made it possible to transform these coaches into prominent, high-impact moving billboards that will be seen by thousands of people every day on both sides of the border," said Greg Hammond,

chairman of the Ontario Motor Coach Association.

"Everyday, they will carry the message through southern Ontario, New York and right into the heart of the Big Apple that Ontario — and Toronto in particular — are terrific places to visit," added Brian Crow, president of the association.

Two coaches have been given special promotional wraps, while 30 more coaches feature large Ontario tourism ads on the back. All the coaches make regularly scheduled runs or transport tour groups, across Ontario and Canada and into the United States.

The specially-decaled coaches, operated by Greyhound and Coach Canada, will be in daily service for six months.

"We are thrilled to invest \$200,000 in the "Road to



Recovery" campaign launched by the Ontario Motor Coach Association," said Coburn. "This funding is part of the government's two-year, \$138 million Tourism Economic Recovery Plan to rebuild confidence in Toronto and Ontario as world-class tourism destinations."

Crow says Ontario's motorcoach tourism industry has seen business drop by 30 to 40 percent this year. "Any and all ways we can promote

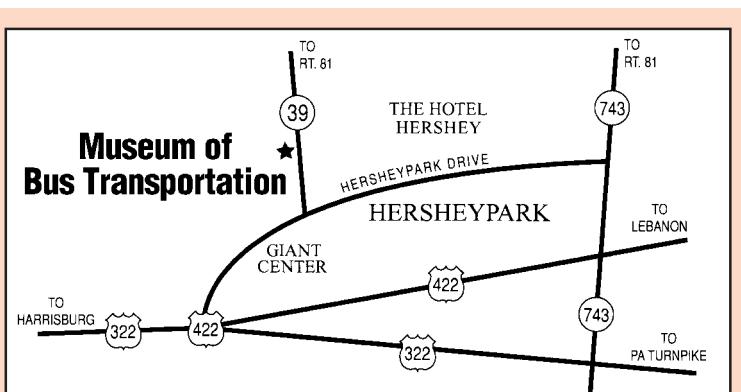
travel to our province and our city can only help," he said.

Greyhound operates 95 trips weekly between Toronto and New York, while Coach Canada, a unit of Coach USA, operates four trips each way.

Separately, the National Tour Association lent strong symbolic support to the effort to help Toronto and Ontario recover from the SARS outbreak of earlier this year by having its board of directors

meet last week in Toronto.

"Since September 11, we in the industry have all learned how fragile tourism can be and while it can be turned off virtually in the blink of an eye, it takes a concerned and collective effort to turn it back on," said NTA President Hank Phillips. "We are very pleased to offer our support to Toronto in recovering from its recent struggles and to quickly re-emerge as one of the world's top tourism destinations."



Meeting, fundraising dinner announced by bus museum

HERSEY, Pa. — The Museum of Bus Transportation is hosting an open house and fundraising dinner, featuring PBS News Hour anchor Jim Lehrer, on the last Saturday in October.

A full afternoon and evening of activities begins at 2 p.m. with the museum's annual meeting. Following the meeting there will be a two-hour bus tour of Hersey-area attractions, including Chocolate World. Hersey is home to the world-famous chocolate company bearing its name.

Climaxing the day's events will be the museum's annual fundraising dinner at 6 p.m. Lehrer, who has a family history in the bus industry, will be the

evening speaker.

Early arrivers for the activities can tour the museum's antique bus and memorabilia displays. The museum opens at 9 a.m.

"We encourage everyone not to miss this unique opportunity to visit the museum, meet Jim Lehrer, and learn more about the museum's current projects and future plans," said museum Secretary John Dockendorf. "Anyone interested in buses is cordially invited to attend this special occasion."

Tickets for all activities on Saturday, Oct. 25, are \$50 each. For more information or to purchase tickets, call (717) 774-4848 or (717) 787-1220. Or, e-mail Jdockendorf@state.pa.us.

Mass. seminar is well-attended

MILLBURY, Mass. — Representatives from 30 companies attended a Motorcoach Safety Seminar last month that featured speakers from federal and state regulatory and enforcement agencies.

The day-long event was organized and hosted by the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Energy in partnership with the New England Bus Transportation Association, the Massachusetts State Police and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

The seminar included classroom presentations and hands-on demonstrations of Level 5 Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance inspections. It was conducted at Fox Bus Lines in Millbury. More than 55 individuals attended.

Mike Sharff, president of New England Bus Transportation Association welcomed attendees, along with Brian Cristy, director of the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Energy Transportation Division.

Richard Bates, FMCSA state director, spoke on DOT compliance reviews and the SAFESTAT scoring system; Lt. Scott Szala from the state police commercial vehicle enforcement section spoke on driver-caused crashes, as well as



Complete under-bus safety inspections were conducted by Massachusetts commercial vehicle field investigators in the maintenance shop of Fox Bus Lines in Millbury, Mass.

traffic enforcement for commercial motor vehicles.

Chris Crean, director of safety at Peter Pan Bus Lines, spoke about the expanding responsibilities of safety directors, especially in areas of training, security and liability prevention. He emphasized the need to be proactive.

After the classroom presentations, field inspectors from the Department of Telecommuni-

tions and Energy conducted Level 5 inspections on two coaches, a Van Hool and MCI.

For many attendees, this was the first time they had witnessed such inspections. The goal was to provide a better understanding of the field investigator duties, said Tim Davis of the Department of Telecommunications and Energy.

Participants universally expressed enthusiasm for the event.

USDOT to study impact of Mexican buses, trucks

WASHINGTON — The 8-year battle to keep Mexican buses and trucks out of the U.S. is going to drag on for at least another 12 to 18 months — and quite possibly a lot longer — as a result of a Bush administration decision.

The USDOT announced it will comply with a federal appeals court order and study the environmental consequences of allowing Mexican buses and trucks to travel beyond border zones.

Last January, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals stopped the federal government from implementing aspects of the decade-old North American Free Trade Agreement that would allow Mexican trucks and buses on American highways. Labor unions, trucking groups and environmentalists had filed suit to block access by commercial Mexican vehicles.

In their lawsuits, the groups claimed the federal government had not determined the impact of emissions from Mexican buses and trucks on the environment.

Now, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has awarded a \$1.8 million contract to a Virginia-based consulting company to prepare a full-blown environmental impact statement that will measure the short- and long-term effect of Mexican buses and trucks. The study is expected to take up to 18 months.

However, few observers expect the environmental study to be the last word on the issue. Groups opposing the opening of the border to Mexican vehicles could easily go back to the courts to challenge the validity of the environmental study, and they have hinted they don't think the FMCSA is pre-

pared to adequately enforce safety regulations.

The FMCSA strongly rejects the latter notion.

"FMCSA is ready now and will

be ready whenever the Mexican border is opened to ensure the safety of border operations," FMCSA Administrator Annette Sandberg said in a statement.

President Bush made opening the border an early priority of his administration but had been blocked by lawsuits and the courts.

"My gut tells me this will drag

through the courts for years unless the White House lights a fire under it," said one coach industry official who has been watching the NAFTA battle from Day One.

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We are America's coach.

Push to improve cell phone coverage

Legislators in West Virginia want improved cell phone service across the state and especially along the West Virginia Turnpike. Cell phone service is basically nonexistent between Charleston and the Mossy exit of the turnpike, a stretch of about 40 miles.

State officials are concerned that a terrorist attack or other serious emergency could go unreported because cell phone callers could not get a signal.

Last winter, a bill to improve cell phone coverage on the turnpike was introduced but went nowhere.

Tort reform: Get involved

Leave it to the truckers to know a good thing when they see it. Like tort reform.

Truckers, through the American Trucking Associations' Insurance Task Force and state trucking associations, have been strongly supporting tort reform efforts and the American Tort Reform Association, which is tackling the issue on a state-by-state basis across the U.S.

For the uninitiated, tort reform is absolutely essential if auto liability insurance rates for motorcoach operators are ever going to be brought under control.

A number of broad-based tort reforms have been adopted this year, including efforts to roll back the influence of plaintiff attorney bars in a handful of states.

Still, the successes are not yet widespread and there is a long way to go. But with insurers abandoning whole business sectors and doctors striking, tort reform has taken on new impetus. That momentum resulted in passage this year of a number of reform bills.

Here's a roundup of tort reform efforts across the country:

- Arkansas - Overhaul of state civil justice system.
- Idaho - Caps on noneconomic damages and a "clear and convincing" standard for recovery of punitive damages.
- Louisiana - Employer immunity on disclosure of background information; jury service reform.
- Mississippi - General tort reform.
- Montana - Punitive damage limits.
- Minnesota - Joint and several liability threshold raised from 15 percent to 50 percent.
- Ohio - General tort reform, joint and several liability.
- Pennsylvania - Joint and several liability.
- Texas - Seat belt use admissibility; joint and several liability; venue.

'Tort reform has taken on new impetus. A number of reform bills have passed.'

- West Virginia - Venue.

Work also is ongoing in Iowa and Missouri, where solid reform bills were vetoed by their governors.

As Fred C. Burns Jr., chairman of the American Trucking Associations' Insurance Task Force, wrote in *Transport Topics*: "Tort reform is not and cannot be a one-year project."

And in the ground transportation industry, it shouldn't be the exclusive purview of the trucking industry. Coach operators and state motorcoach associations need to lend their support to the truckers and trucking associations in their home states.

Chambers of Commerce in many states also support tort reform efforts.

Burns, who is president of a Marlinton, W. Va.-based motor freight company, could be speaking about the motorcoach industry when he says "I think we as trucking company owners often lose sight of the bigger picture - that we're a large and visible part of the general business community. We have the assets, but we

don't often enough use the clout that comes with those assets to work in legislatures to get what we need for our businesses.

"We tend to shy away from issues that cross business boundaries, sticking with more parochial issues like highway financing and access. On those occasions where we have joined with the business community at large, too often we aren't out front steering the discussions.

"I think we can work at being more effective in presenting our public policy positions, and getting tort reform legislation passed in the states gives us the opportunity to flex this muscle. ... You can and must engage in this process. Just as this country asks little of us as citizens but to vote, I'm not asking you do too much but to look at your bottom line and say that it can be improved."

Tort reform is a quantifiable way to improve it.

Tax amnesty: If the shoe fits

With states across the U.S. facing huge revenue shortfalls, tax collectors have dredged up a familiar old tool to bolster revenues — tax amnesties.

Not since the recession years of the 1980s have so many states adopted tax amnesty programs designed to rake in revenue that otherwise would go uncollected.

Coach operators with delinquent tax liabilities may want to have their tax adviser look into amnesty programs, which frequently waive penalties, and reduce or waive interest. Here's a sampling of amnesty programs:

- Arizona launched a tax amnesty the first of this month with officials hoping to collect \$25 million in unpaid taxes. The last Arizona amnesty, 20 years ago, resulted in about 10,000 taxpayers stepping forward and adding \$6 million in revenue to state coffers.

Arizona's program is for the years 1983 through 2002, and applies to a variety of taxes, including corporate income, sales and partnership. Businesses and individuals participating in the amnesty can avoid penalties and criminal prosecution, and get a reduced interest rate.

The Arizona program ends Oct. 31. Information is available at www.taxamnesty.az.gov.

- Virginia also began an amnesty during the first week of September. The Old Dominion program, which ends Nov. 3, allows taxpayers to pay only the tax due and half the interest on eligible outstanding tax bills and

delinquent returns. All assessed penalties are waived.

Taxpayers who do not participate in the program and are caught will be assessed a 20 percent penalty on top of the unpaid tax bill. The Virginia program is for taxable years before 2002 for individual and corporate income tax returns and 2003 for business tax returns.

Visit www.vataxamnesty.com for full information.

- The tax amnesty program in Illinois is from Oct. 1 to Nov. 17, and allows taxpayers to pay outstanding liabilities without penalty and interest.

The amnesty period is June 30, 1983, to July 1, 2002.

Information is available at www.revenue.state.il.us/publications/bulletins/2004/Fy200411.pdf.

- New York City taxpayers can apply for amnesty from Oct. 20 through Jan. 23, for city business and excise taxes.

Under the program, the city Department of Finance will waive penalties and reduce interest for qualifying taxpayers who owe taxes for tax years or periods ending before 2002. Interest will be charged only for the period since Oct. 20, 2002.

Included in the program are taxes on commercial motor vehicles, corporations, transfers of taxicab licenses and unincorporated businesses. Sorry, it does not apply to unpaid parking debts.

More information on the New York City program is available at www.nyc.gov/html/doft/pdf/02pdf/amnesty_faqs.pdf.

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Advisory Board

MCI doubles lift retrofit capacity by adding West Coast service branch

LOS ALAMITOS, Calif. — Motor Coach Industries has doubled its capacity to retrofit wheelchair lifts in MCI coaches by adding the capability at its West Coast service and sales center.

The service expansion is designed to support fleets that must meet Americans with Disabilities Act deadlines, which continue to loom large for coach operators, especially line-haul carriers.

To introduce its western customers to the retrofit service, the company is offering special introductory pricing, said Duane Church, general manager of the MCI Fleet Support Center in Los Alamitos.

"The advantage of using Fleet Support and OEM materials is that we offer the same expertise as with the factory-installed product," said Church. "When we install a lift on a D4500, E4500 or J4500 coach, the structure and supporting gussets are welded in place just as they would have been on the production line."

MCI's other location offering OEM wheelchair-lift retrofits is its Loudonville, Ohio, service and bus rebuilding center.

Wheelchair lifts installed at the service centers are the same models used on new coaches. Ricon lifts are installed on D-series coaches, and a Stewart & Stevenson lift on G4500, E4500 and J4500 models. Both come with a one-year limited warranty.

MCI also offers optional body work, painting and



repair, along with quick turnaround time and pickup and delivery services, at its service centers.

For information, call Church at (800) 777-4101, or in Loudonville, Jim Gabor at (419) 490-2104.



Carl Lajeunesse



Rob Lawson



Patricia Moller



Linda Russell

Peter Pan expands, strengthens charter unit, customer service

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. — Peter Pan Bus Lines says it has made a new commitment to grow its charter and tour operation, and named Carl Lajeunesse, former vice president and general manager of The Arrow Line in East Hartford, Conn., to take on the chore.

New England's largest bus operator also has named Rob Lawson to be charter sales manager, and promoted Patricia Moller to customer service manager. Long-time company employee Linda Russell was named group tour specialist.

Lajeunesse joins Peter Pan as general manager of charter operations. He will coordinate Peter Pan's tour and charter business

based in Springfield, as well as the charter operation at The Arrow Line in Connecticut.

Lajeunesse comes to Peter Pan directly from The Arrow Line, which was acquired by Peter Pan earlier this year with four other former subsidiaries of Coach USA.

Lawson returns to Peter Pan, where he worked for about six years before joining The Arrow Line in 1999.

Ms. Moller has worked for Peter Pan for seven years as a group tour coordinator.

Ms. Russell has been affiliated with Peter Pan for nearly 30 years and previously managed Peter Pan World Travel.



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INDUSTRY NEWS

Luxury bus services

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

who either live in the Hamptons and work in the city, or live in Manhattan and have summer or vacation homes in such popular Hamptons' communities as Water Mill, Bridgehampton, Sag Harbor, Amagansett and Montauk.

Both operators say things are going well, mainly because of their distinctive location.

"This market is fairly unique, being the Hamptons," notes Thomas F. Neely, marketing director at Hampton Jitney. "We have a tremendous number of people with second homes out here that live in Manhattan or the immediate suburbs and who travel here on a regular basis, and a lot of them don't have cars."

Among the few places in the United States with possible similar situations, he suggests, are Boston and the Gold Coast, and Houston and the Gulf Coast.

Upscale riders

Neely notes that people who ride the company's Ambassador Service are upscale types who are used to first-class service when they travel, which keeps them away from the Long Island Railroad and even the traditional or nonluxury coach service that Hampton Jitney has been offering commuters for nearly 30 years.

"We are not catering to the lower budget crowd here, and I think the people who ride the Ambassador appreciate the extra bit of service they get," he adds.

Hampton Jitney's coaches accommodate 30 passengers in three-across, extra-wide plush seats. There are individual electric-power outlets for laptop computers, an on-board attendant, and complimentary refreshments, snacks and reading material.

Hampton Luxury Lines co-owner James Magiaras says a gradual increase in riders who own vacation homes in the Hamptons and individuals who live there year around but continue to work in the city has helped his company build a steady stable of daily commuters. "The East End used to be strictly summer homes but more and more now it is becoming year-round living," he emphasizes.

The luxury commuter operation has been boosted, too, he says, by the horrendous highway traffic conditions between Manhattan and the Hamptons, which discourages those people who do have cars from making the drive themselves.

"And, I think they just like our



Hampton Luxury Liner uses a Bluebird LTC-40 for its daily runs from Manhattan to the eastern end of Long Island.

service," he adds, noting that customers ride on modified MCIs that have been redesigned inside to seat 24 in a two-plus-one arrangement, and a Blue Bird that has been reworked to hold 21 seats.

All of the coaches feature leather reclining captain's chairs, carpeted floors, upholstered walls and individual headsets for movies. They also are equipped with a galley in the rear where passengers can help themselves to snacks and beverages and daily newspapers.

The one-way fare is \$24 during non-peak hours and \$37 during the busy work commute period.

Hampton Jitney passengers pay \$35 one-way and \$60 round trip.

The venture into luxury service for the business travelers is the second try for Hampton Jitney. It introduced a Club Service with modified buses, attendants, snacks and beverages 10 years ago but gave it up after just a year because not enough people were riding. "I don't know if the market just wasn't ready for it or what, but it didn't work," notes Neely.

The Ambassador service is popular enough that Hampton Jitney has extended the service to winter runs between New York City and Miami, Fla. The two-day trip, with an overnight stay in North Carolina, includes an auto transport service. "They leave us their car, board our coach and their car is waiting for them when they get to the other end," says Neely.

The Coach hits the field

While New York may be the ideal place for luxury bus service, an Oklahoma entrepreneur has found the concept works on the Great Plains as well.

Trucking industry consultant Chris Gorman was looking for a way to avoid the flight delays and long lines he often encountered at the airports on his frequent trips to and from Dallas when he decided to start a motorcoach company

that would offer a luxury service between the two cities.

America Coach Inc., marketed simply as The Coach, has grown beyond the posh, single-city bus line he envisioned when he formed the company in December 2001. As partners, he brought in former University of Oklahoma and Dallas Cowboys head football coach Barry Switzer and one-time Oklahoma Attorney General Larry Derryberry.

In addition to the Oklahoma City-Dallas run, the company offers full charter services and says it's preparing to expand its luxury service to other cities and its charter service with more coaches. "Things have really been busy around here," says Vice President Brian Haynes.

As with others that have tried, The Coach luxury service has involved a learning curve. It overestimated demand and spec'd it using the wrong buses. Initially, the executive passenger service began with twice daily trips, but that was scaled back to one a day as passenger counts settled in.

Service also was begun with a matched pair of 12-passenger cut-away buses that were fitted with leather seats, pull-down desks, power outlets for laptop computers and satellite television. One of those buses has been reassigned to charter service. Today, The Coach also uses an E4500 MCI equipped with two-and-one executive Amaya leather seats for the Dallas to Oklahoma City runs.

An attendant serves snacks and beverages during the three-hour and 15-minute trip between Westin hotels in the two cities and the cost is \$125 roundtrip.

"We were really surprised because we thought business people would make up the majority of our client but it really has varied widely," notes Haynes. "We have a lot of people going shopping and doing other things down there and it now looks like we have about 50 percent riding for business and 50

percent riding for pleasure." Dallas has long been a shopping Mecca for wealthy residents of Oklahoma.

Passenger counts vary, too, he says, with the coach running full most of the time toward the end of the week and fewer people riding early in the week.

Haynes says things began to change when the company dropped back to one-a-day runs and started offering the second coach for small charter jobs. "We just kept getting call after call and we realized that the demand was really there for a charter service."

The Coach fleet now includes a second E4500 MCI with conventional seating, an F3500 and a brand-new J4500. The buses' livery features sports-themed decals.

"We're doing very well right now," says Haynes.

According to Haynes, the company is considering copying the luxury passenger service for runs between Oklahoma City and Tulsa, and between Shreveport and New Orleans. He says both connections are appealing because there is not good air service between the two Louisiana cities. No timetable has been set for adding the services.

"And, by the first of the year, we'll probably add another two full-size buses for our charter service," adds Haynes.

Successful model

When coach operators in the U.S. beginning looking for examples of successful luxury bus services they can model, their investigation invariably takes them to the province of Alberta in Canada. There they find the most successful North American luxury bus service outside of Mexico.

Red Arrow Motorcoach has been doing it with great success for close to 25 years, operating luxury coaches between Edmonton and Calgary since 1979.

"People seem to like the luxury we offer and the productive time

they have while riding the coach," General Manager Scott Janes says of why the company has been successful with its service. "They have a lot of extra elbow room and they can work while they ride."

Red Arrow uses 45-foot Prevost coaches that have been modified to hold just 36 over-size seats in a two-plus-one arrangement and are equipped with electric ports for laptop computers, television and movie monitors, individual headsets and credit card-activated cell phones. The coaches also have a galley in the rear where customers can get snacks and beverages.

Janes says the company has been marketing the Edmonton and Calgary service by comparing it to flying between the two cities, which costs \$143 one-way and involves about three hours of what he calls "wasted time" riding in taxi cabs and waiting in airport lines.

Red Arrow, which charges a one-way fare of \$36, makes the run in three hours, but allows passengers to work the entire time. "They can be much more productive."

No guarantees

But creating a luxury bus service that appears to emulate Red Arrow is no guarantee of success. Just ask Doug Anderson, president of Anderson Coach and Tours in Greenville, Pa.

Last spring, Anderson shut down his ExecConnect America luxury service between Pittsburgh and Cleveland after about a year.

ExecConnect developed a core group of travelers but it never grew to the point where the run was breaking even.

Anderson says the run was troubled by using pickup points at airports and downtown hotels that potential customers said were not convenient, and some corporate policies that prohibited executives from using a commercial carrier on trips of less than 300 miles.

The service offered coaches that had been outfitted with 27 extra-wide leather seats, plus a number of other amenities. It also had on-board attendants and beverage and food service.

The one-way fare was \$79 and roundtrip was \$129.

Obviously, operating a successful luxury commuter service for business travelers can be a challenging business in its own right. Success clearly depends on the right combination of connecting cities, pickup and drop off locations, onboard services and equipment. Anything short of that and you're likely to end up with a major hole in your bank account.

LimoLiner

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

accommodating 28 passengers in reclining Amaya leather seats with leg rests and tray tables. There will be a conference table in the rear, along with a mid-coach kitchen-bath-serving area.

Plenty of amenities

Passengers will be assisted by an attendant—the company is advertising for what it calls “travel attendants”—who will not only provide beverages and snacks but serve as an information resource, helping with such things as taxicab and hotel arrangements.

Other onboard amenities include free Internet access at each seat, “clear” cell phone reception for the duration of the trip, power ports along side each seat, and enroute video and audio, including XM Radio and satellite TV, for entertainment and news.

Travelers will be able to board LimoLiner up to two minutes prior to departure, baggage will be quickly loaded and unloaded, and there will be a “brief, yet respectful, security check.”

The goal, says LimoLiner, is to provide travel “without the typical hassles of commuting—security delays, high prices, restrictive fares and crowded terminals.”

The introductory one-way fare is \$69 and \$138 roundtrip. The

roundtrip tariff is about \$40 less than Amtrak’s Acela Express and hundreds less than an airline ticket.

However, travel time on LimoLiner will be roughly four hours, versus an hour for a flight—not counting the normal airport wait time. LimoLiner says “door-to-door” time will be comparable with flying.

‘Each seated position will be a self-contained office or entertainment center. The back section can be reserved for working groups.’

The departure and destination points for the Monday through Friday service will be the Hilton New York on Avenue of the Americas and the Hilton Back Bay Hotel on Dalton Street. Departures from both cities are 6 and 10:25 a.m. and 2:50 and 7:15 p.m.

Tickets can be purchased at www.limoliner.com.

LimoLiner has retained a public relations firm and hired a direct mail company to help coordinate its market launch. Early publicity has included a story in *The Wall Street Journal*.

McCann is CEO, with the remainder of the LimoLiner management team composed of Sarah Weill, general manager; John Spellings, operations adviser, and Lori Cohen, marketing adviser.

Unusual coaches are spec'd

Spellings, who has 30 years experience in the coach industry, both in the passenger and conversion-bus businesses, has spec'd three unusual coaches for LimoLiner.

Rather than take a seated coach and convert it to a luxury bus, he began by purchasing three new

cars, with the available conference table. The back section can be reserved for working groups.

Each seated position, with the various plug-ins, tray tables, A/V equipment, A/C vents and individual lighting, will be what Spellings describes as a “self-contained office or entertainment center.” Overhead will be custom cabinets

McCann stopped Celtic from being put into receivership by its bankers by a mere eight minutes. In so doing, he took on the mantel of a savior of one of Scotland's renowned sports and social institutions.

After gaining control of the club, he grew revenues from \$12 million to \$48 million annually and its market value on the London Stock Exchange to \$200 million. He also built one of Europe's largest and most impressive stadiums.

By the time he sold his majority interest in the club, however, McCann was no longer the beloved expatriate who had saved the Celtic. Like many sports franchise owners in the U.S., McCann became controversial. The club was again faltering on the field and McCann was accused of being unwilling to pay the price for quality players. He also became a high-profile campaigner against religious and racial bigotry in Scotland and Ireland.

After leaving the team, he reportedly moved on to Bermuda.

McCann's business background includes founding and building International Golf Group, which operates and markets international golf tours and manages tournaments, into a multi-million dollar organization. He also worked in the beverage and fashion industries in Canada.

MCI E4500 conversion shells and building the interiors from scratch. The goal was to start with a high-end conversion coach and slim it down to a luxury passenger bus—rather than the other way around. That means, of course, lots of carpeting and expensive counter tops and cabinetry.

A principal advantage of going this route was the eight-inch higher ceiling in a conversion shell. “You really notice the extra headroom,” says Spellings. “It's a much different feel.”

The coach interiors are divided into three distinct sections, with the front area having 18 side-by-side seats. Like many conversion coaches, the mid-cabin area will have the galley and bath. In the rear will be seating for 10 passengers instead of traditional luggage racks.

Spellings is experimenting with the driver area. LimoLiner No. 1 will have a curtain to screen the driver, while LimoLiner No. 2 will have a wall and bulkhead arrangement with an entry door for the driver. Passenger preference will be gauged.

Who is Fergus McCann?

Bankrolling and managing all of this will be Fergus McCann, a native of Scotland who immigrated to Canada, struck it rich, and returned to his native Scotland in 1994 to rescue the Celtic Football Club in Glasgow. Celtic is legendary for being the first British soccer club ever to win the European Cup.

According to one account,

Caterpillar puts up \$87 million to cover fines

WASHINGTON — Officials of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency say Caterpillar Inc., the heavy duty diesel engine maker, has put up \$87 million to offset EPA penalties it expects to incur for selling engines that do not comply with October 2002 emission rules.

The money is to cover penalties for selling engines that don't meet required exhaust emissions levels. Of the amount put in escrow, EPA said Caterpillar had paid fines of about \$42 million for sale of non-complying engines through March.

Caterpillar's so-called bridge engines, the ones incurring the penalties, were certified by the EPA for sale under terms of a 1998 court decree. However, Cat must pay a penalty of several thousand dollars for each engine it sells that doesn't meet the 2002 emissions standards.

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INDUSTRY NEWS**Bus Security**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

its perceived security threats.

A key element of the study was a survey sent to 2,012 motorcoach operators, or just over 54 percent of the nearly 3,700 private coach companies believed to be operating in the U.S.

A total of 224 surveys were returned, representing just over 11 percent of the companies targeted. However, Volpe researchers were able to increase the number of companies to 343, or 17 percent of the total, by working with Coach USA to obtain a single survey representing its 119 individual companies.

What the survey uncovered was, for the most part, what you would expect:

- Fewer than 25 percent of the operators have written security plans.
- Big operators are more likely to have some level of security training than smaller operators.

• Nearly half the companies returning surveys had some contact with local law enforcement in the previous year. The study did not indicate the nature of the contact, which could have been to take care of speeding tickets.

• The most common security technologies employed by operators with fewer than 100 vehicles are cell phones and fuel tank locks.

• Big companies are more likely to also use alarm systems, closed-circuit television surveillance and intrusion detection equipment.

Easily one of the most interesting aspects of the survey had to do with "perceived security threats." A relatively small percentage of operators were willing to identify what the study calls "significant" perceived security threats. Here are the numbers:

• Fewer than 13 percent of those returning surveys thought "operator assault" was a significant security threat.

• Less than 12 percent thought vehicle hijacking was a significant threat.

• About 11 percent indicated explosives in the engine compartment were a significant threat.

• And, just over 10 percent

thought weapons brought on board by passengers were a significant threat.

Here's the kicker: Virtually the same number of operators, 12 percent, perceive their operations face no significant security threat whatsoever.

Despite the industry perception that security is not a major concern, the researchers at Volpe contend that other factors argue for enhanced security planning, programs and procedures.

The basis of their argument is this: "The prominence of bus travel and the large number of passengers who rely on this service requires that security be a fundamental objective for motorcoach operators and federal agencies."

Although the study's executive summary notes in several places that there have been no terrorist-related attacks against the coach industry in the U.S., it contends the potential for attack is omnipresent. And it sights the record of terrorist attacks directed at buses elsewhere in the world, including Europe, as the most compelling reason for concern.

To improve industry security, the Volpe study recommends a number of both near-term and long-term improvements to reduce the industry's vulnerability. These include:

- Enhancing employee training and promoting customer vigilance
- Supporting security education and training

- Focusing training on deterrence, detection and response
- Improving the sharing of intelligence and information
- Forming government-industry partnerships to develop practical approaches to security
- Identifying best practices
- Initiating a federal prohibition of unchecked/undeclared weapons and hazardous materials on motorcoaches.

"Given the potential threats facing the industry, many opportunities exist to develop initiatives to assess and begin to strengthen the security readiness of the motorcoach industry," says the Volpe study.

"Federal, state and local government, industry associations and operators must focus on both long- and short-term efforts to increase security awareness, improve cooperation across agencies and jurisdictions, evaluate industry threats and vulnerabilities in more detail, improve operating practices, and develop emergency response, mitigation and recovery strategies," the study asserts.

The Volpe study received hands-on input from the United Motorcoach Association, the American Bus Association, Coach USA, Greyhound Lines, Paradise Trailways in West Hempstead, N.Y. and Cauley Coach in St. Albans, N.Y.

John Steinhoff and Phil Hanley provided key leadership at the FMCSA.

CVSA committee meets next month in Savannah

WASHINGTON — The Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance's important passenger carrier committee will have its annual fall workshop the second week in October in Savannah, Ga.

The committee agenda includes

sessions on fire suppression systems, federal safety rules for 15-passenger vans, LED light defect standards, remanufactured vehicles, and updates by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, National Highway Traffic Safety

Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board.

The meeting will be Oct. 7-8.

Further information can be obtained by calling the CVSA at (202) 775-1623 or going to www.cvsa.org.

Hydrogen fuel cells may harm environment, funding in jeopardy

PASADENA, Calif. — Researchers at the California Institute of Technology have concluded that widespread use of hydrogen fuel cells to power buses, trucks and autos could speed destruction of the ozone layer, which protects Earth from cancer-causing ultraviolet rays.

Several companies have extensive research projects underway aimed at adapting hydrogen fuel cells to power vehicles that use a diesel- or gasoline-fuel-powered engine today. Fuel cells are a key piece of President Bush's energy plan.

It appears that members of the president's own party in the U.S. House of Representatives don't share his enthusiasm for hydrogen-powered vehicles. House Republican leaders trimmed funds for the president's plan to develop hydrogen fuel cell vehicles, saying they're trying to slow federal spending, Bloomberg news service reports.

Before it adjourned for its August recess, the House set aside \$219 million, about \$38 million less than Bush wants, for research on fuel-cell vehicles and fuel-cell technology.

Bush pledged in January to spend \$1.7 billion over the next five years on the hydrogen initiative. Through partnerships with private companies, Bush said the program would make environmentally friendly, hydrogen-powered vehicles affordable and widely used by 2020.

However, research by scientists at CalTech suggests fuel cells may not be as environmentally benign as many believe. In an article published in Science magazine, the researchers said if hydrogen is widely used to replace fossil fuels, large amounts of hydrogen would drift into the stratosphere as a result of leakage and indirectly cause increased depletion of the ozone.

The scientists contend that much is still not known about the hydrogen cycle and they say hydrogen's impact on ozone destruction should be considered when gauging the potential environmental downside of a hydrogen-fuel economy.

The researchers also note that

FedEx hybrid truck; fuel cells for UPS

FedEx Express, the air parcel subsidiary of FedEx Corp., plans to test a hybrid electric medium-duty truck that could one day become FedEx's standard delivery vehicle.

Rival United Parcel Service says it plans to work with DaimlerChrysler and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to create a fuel cell delivery vehicle demonstration program.

technologies could be developed to reduce hydrogen releases, mitigating the problem.

Fossil fuels, including coal, oil and natural gas, produce chemicals that pollute the air, as well as the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide. A hydrogen fuel cell, when making energy, releases only water as a byproduct, which is why fuel cell technology has generated so much interest.

But the CalTech researchers raised the possibility that if hydrogen fuel replaced fossil fuels entirely, it could be expected that 10 to 20 percent of the hydrogen would leak from pipelines, storage facilities, processing plants and fuel cells in vehicles and at power plants.

Because hydrogen is lighter than air it would rise into the stratosphere, where it would oxidize and form water. "This would result in cooling of the lower stratosphere and the disturbance of ozone chemistry," the researchers wrote. It also would mean bigger and longer-lasting ozone holes in both the Arctic and Antarctic regions, where drops in ozone levels have been recorded over the past 20 years.

They estimated ozone depletion could be as much as 8 percent.

A top official of the International Association for Hydrogen Energy expressed skepticism about the CalTech findings. "Leakage will be much less than what they are considering," he said.

SunLine Transit

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

funds and engaged in numerous other administrative shenanigans.

There appears to be a mountain of evidence that SunLine — under Cromwell — routinely used funds supplied by the FTA to pay for non-transit activities.

In the 12 years Miller ran SunLine Transit, he transformed the small, remote agency into one of the best-known public transit organizations in the world. Yes, the world. He also made it such a powerful economic development force in Palm Springs and environs that the entire region became complicit in his ambitious and aggressive programs and the slight of hand he used in executing them.

Among other things, his initiatives helped fill hundreds of rooms in area resorts with visitors from 31 countries who came to view SunLine's alternative fuels program. Additionally, he bolstered the local visitor industry by bringing in conferences and conventions.

He filled classrooms at a local college by helping it develop a training program for technicians who maintain alternative fuel buses. Students, too, came from around the world.

He set up a half-dozen affiliate organizations, one of which borrowed more than \$850,000 to buy 50 CNG taxicabs and lease them to private operators. Oh, yes, SunLine Transit guaranteed the loan.

He won a \$1 million grant from the federal government and built a chain of natural gas fueling stations so anyone with a CNG car, truck or bus could fill up.

Not content to run a regional bus system, he created a street sweeping program for communities in the region.

He jumped in bed with Texas oil magnate T. Boone Pickens, who owns 22 percent of Clean Energy Fuels Inc., the company that supplies natural gas to the Cromwell/SunLine CNG empire.

Of course, Cromwell had to serve on a three-member advisory board to Clean Energy but he failed to list the affiliation on his state conflict-of-interest forms.

The list goes on and on.

But as much as anything, Cromwell brought great PR to Palm Springs and the entire Coachella Valley, an area that is known for little else than its tony golf resorts, stinging-hot summers, blowing dust, mild winters and sprawling desert homes of the rich and famous.

Miller and members of the



SunLine Transit General Manager and CEO Richard Cromwell III sits in a hydrogen fuel cell car at the agency in Thousand Palms, Calif.

California Bus Association bumped heads with Cromwell repeatedly over a half-dozen years, and at least three times filed formal complaints with the FTA, alleging violation of federal charter rules by SunLine. Each filing had the same result: The FTA found SunLine violated the rules and was ordered to stop. However, the FTA did little else despite the repeated offenses.

So, Miller was not surprised by the latest FTA decision. He and the entire free world would have been shocked if the FTA had acted out of character and granted his request for reimbursement or decided to withhold money from SunLine.

The FTA consistently refuses to impose penalties when it finds a public transit agency has violated its regulations. The federal agency favors maintaining its cozy relationship with the transit systems it funds and is suppose to regulate.

Instead of meting out penalties, the FTA slaps agencies on the wrist, issuing cease-and-desist orders. In effect, it tells the transit agencies to go and sin no more. Repeat violators get the same treatment time and again.

While SunLine's charter service violations were so egregious the FTA couldn't ignore them — after the CBA and Miller filed complaints, the agency apparently ignored Cromwell's other antics.

As it turns out, red flags began going up in the mid-1990s that Cromwell wasn't playing by the rules, yet his reign continued for another eight years.

No one, not the FTA, the California Department Transportation, local oversight boards, local media or the industry trade press diligently pressed the issue or questioned how a transit system of fewer than 50 buses could build an empire that, among other things, became "an international test center for the commercialization of energy technologies."

"The agency is responding (to revelations regarding Cromwell's dealings) by putting new practices in place to resolve the issues. That's it. Has this happened before? Of course. It will probably happen again. That's the way it is when you are forging new territory.

"Should we stop trying to do new things in the same old system? No, that's how the same old system changes to accommodate new ideas and forward thinking; that's how we benefit as a community; that's how we get CNG buses and alternative fuel vehicles on the road and our streets swept under a regional comprehensive program; that's how we become a center for research and development for new alternative fuel applications, and that's how we attract new businesses and manufacturing for alternative fuel technology."

Clearly, with Cromwell, the ends trump the means — even when spending millions of federal tax dollars and following the rules that specify how that money is to be used.

Belatedly, the FTA is joining state, county and local agencies that are taking a close look at SunLine's practices. A major audit was announced last week.

One of the areas SunLine's own board is focusing on is the agency's travel and entertainment spending under Cromwell.

An investigation by *The Desert Sun* revealed that Cromwell and his cronies spent more on lunches, dinners and travel, and charged more on agency credit cards, than managers of transit systems two and three times larger.

Cromwell and his top staffers spent tens of thousands of dollars annually for restaurants, hotels and airfares. He fed at the public trough, literally, an average of more than 100 times each year.

He also became an international traveler, thanks to taxpayers. On one trip last year he spent 17 days in Australia looking at a rapid bus system and attending a transit conference. It's not clear why the general manager of a transit system that largely transports housekeepers to resorts, maids to upscale neighborhoods and older residents to medical offices, needs to study a rapid bus system in Australia.

Cromwell, whose annual salary was \$130,000, declined to discuss his use of SunLine credit cards with the Palm Springs newspaper.

He also had no explanation for spending \$114.22 in taxpayer money to send a cheery bouquet of lilies to T. Boone Pickens and the missus.

DriveCam Video releases system software upgrade

SAN DIEGO, Calif. — DriveCam Video Systems, which sells a proprietary video-based system to monitor driver performance, announced availability of an upgraded Windows-based software program that accommodates large fleets.

DriveCam's system integrates video technology and management software to identify high-risk driving habits. Unusual driving events are captured by a palm-sized video recorder mounted behind the rearview mirror.

The system records what drivers see and hear. Video files can be downloaded to a computer, where special software allows managers to view and analyze driving performance. Drivers can then be counseled on their specific driving habits.

DriveCam says its system has reduced the frequency and severity of collisions by 35 to 70 percent.

The HindSight 20/20 software automates the process of downloading video events to a computer. The new version adds functionality and features, including:

- Networking to allow an unlimited number of users to access the database and review driving events.
- Improved user interface.
- Expanded management reports to track improved driver and fleet performance.
- Use of multiple docking stations and/or remote docking stations.
- A point-based grading system for evaluations.

"We worked with our larger fleet customers to provide them with the additional features they need," said DriveCam President Ed Andrew.

Separately, DriveCam has launched what it calls the DriveCam Protected Fleet Certification Program. To be certified, fleets must demonstrate they have integrated the DriveCam system into their fleet operations and driver performance evaluation standards.

DriveCam says certified fleets can lower their insurance costs, reduce operating expenses and enhance their image.

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People



Hugh MacDiarmid **Marc Ellison**

Hugh MacDiarmid has been named president and chief executive of the contract bus operations of *Laidlaw International Inc.* of Naperville, Ill. MacDiarmid succeeds **John Grainger**, who left the company at the end of August.

Grainger had been with Laidlaw for 13 years, serving in a number of senior executive positions. From January 2000 until September 2002, he was president and CEO of Laidlaw Inc., the company name before it was changed when Laidlaw emerged from bankruptcy court protection early this summer. Grainger helped shepherd Laidlaw through its reorganization. For most of the past year, he has headed the contract bus operations, Laidlaw's largest division.

MacDiarmid's business background includes six years as the executive vice president/commercial of Canadian Pacific Railways and eight years as a principal of McKinsey & Company, the noted management consulting company.

"I am delighted to welcome Hugh to the Laidlaw group," said Laidlaw President and CEO **Kevin Benson**. "His background in the transportation industry, combined with his analytical experience gained in his consulting days, is exactly what Laidlaw needs as we reemphasize our core competencies as an engine for future growth."

InterMotive Products, an Auburn, Calif.-based company specializing in the design and manufacture of technologically advanced after-market components for small and midsize buses and shuttles, has named a former Ford Motor Co. executive to be national sales and marketing manager.

Marc Ellison spent 17 years at Ford, holding key marketing and sales management positions, as well as field positions in the company's customer service division. Most recently, he was manager of Remanufactured Transmission Products. At InterMotive, he will head up all sales and marketing.

Del Lisk has been appointed vice president of fleet safety services and **Greg Fisch** has been named director of engineering at DriveCam Video Systems in San

Diego.

For the past 21 years, Lisk has been with Smith System Driver Improvement, the fleet driver training company, serving as president for nearly six years. He developed many fleet safety programs and helped train more than

10,000 fleet drivers. In his new job he will oversee implementation and training for DriveCam's fleet customers.

Fisch has more than 20 years of management and development experience at such organizations as Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Odetics

and Disney. He has a degree in electronic engineering and physics from California State Polytechnic University in Pomona. He will head DriveCam's R&D efforts in fleet safety technology.

Nicole Nason has been named assistant secretary for governmen-

tal affairs for the U.S. Department of Transportation. She joins DOT from the U.S. Customs Service, where she was assistant commissioner of the Office of Congressional Affairs. She also previously served as counsel for the House Judiciary Committee.

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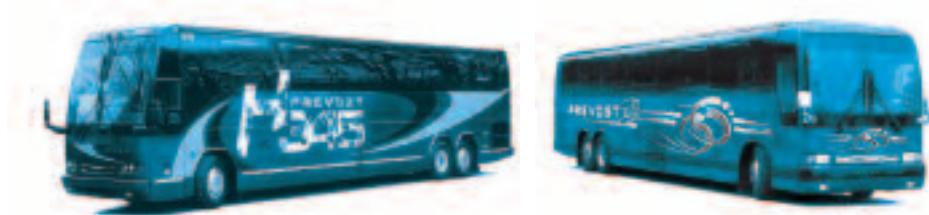
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