

Key public policy issues are targeted by industry

WASHINGTON — The motorcoach industry has targeted four high-priority public policy issues it will focus its efforts on during the next few months. They are:

- Transit competition.
- Federal management of emergency evacuations
- Idling restrictions and biodiesel fuel

• Negotiated rulemaking related to federal charter service rules

The topics were identified and initial plans for dealing with them were developed at an industry public policy pow-wow conducted last month in Washington.

Those attending included representatives from the United Motorcoach Association, the Ameri-

can Bus Association, Trailways Transportation System, International Motor Coach Group, and state motorcoach associations.

"It was a very good session," observed David Brown, chairman of UMA and president of Holiday Tours in Randleman, N.C.

First on the associations' hit list is to push the U.S. Department of

Transportation to start using a new law to go after public transit agencies that flaunt federal prohibitions against providing charter bus service when willing and able private bus companies are available.

The federal highway and public transportation reauthorization bill that became law in August contains language that gives the

USDOT wider latitude in penalizing transit agencies that violate the charter service rules.

Previously, about the only thing the Federal Transit Administration claimed it could do on those rare occasions when it determined a transit agency was violating charter service rules was to

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Seeking Success. Motorcoach Expo 2006 in January will feature 16 educational sessions designed to provide operators with strategies and tools for success. See Page 9 for details.

New Orleans operators struggling to find work two months after storm

NEW ORLEANS — Motorcoach companies in New Orleans that were knocked out of business by Hurricane Katrina continue to struggle to get back on the road two months after the devastating storm.

While some of the operators are finding work shuttling emergency cleanup and repair crews and offering very limited charter and tour services, others remain idle, still looking for things to begin turning around.

"We're just taking it one day at a time and waiting for things to fall back into place," says Barbara Lewis of Lewis Coaches.

She and her husband, Harold, managed to escape from the storm safely, but lost their home, business offices and one of their two motorcoaches in the flooding that devastated much of the city.

They set up an office in the home of their son in La Place, just outside of New Orleans, and arranged to have their business telephone calls automatically transferred to their temporary quarters. However, the only work they've been able to get has been shuttling work crews between Baton Rouge

and New Orleans.

"It's been very difficult for everyone," explains Mrs. Lewis, adding they would like to return the business to New Orleans as soon as possible. "We just have to be patient."

New Orleans Tours

New Orleans Tours, one of the area's largest carriers, lost about 20 buses and other vehicles in the storm and its offices and yard were damaged by flood waters. Still, it was back in business just days after the storm passed, setting up a temporary office near the New Orleans airport.

Although very little charter work has come in since, the company has kept about 20 buses on the road daily transporting emergency work crews, reports spokesman Bob Burg.

The company also holds the contract for the Nokia Sugar Bowl college football game and is developing plans for the job even though the Jan. 2 game has been transferred to Atlanta from New Orleans. "We'll be working with companies in Atlanta now," says Burg.

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20 Groups are coming to UMA

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The most successful and innovative program in the motorcoach industry for improving operator profits and business management will soon be available to members of the United Motorcoach Association.

UMA is teaming up with one of the nation's foremost business development companies to offer the "20 Group" total business management system to its members.

In the bus industry, the 20-Group system is best known for helping members of the International Motor Coach Group boost

their profitability and grow their businesses.

"Participation in 20 Group is the single-biggest factor for the success of my company," says David Brown, president of Holiday Tours of Randleman, N.C., and a member of IMG.

"We were doing well when we joined but the assistance of that group helped me weather the storm of 9/11 and grow profits — while building the company infrastructure to sustain growth and quality. I simply cannot speak highly enough of 20-group participation," adds Brown, who also is

chairman of UMA.

"This is truly a 'bar-raising' undertaking," says Victor Parra, president of CEO of UMA. "Participation in this program will help our operator members run their businesses better, leading to a higher level of profitability."

The same organization, Spader Business Management Inc. of Sioux Falls, S.D., that has helped produce dramatic results for IMG operators members will be partnering with UMA to work with its members.

UMA members that participate

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Luxury D.C.-Philly service fails to attract riders

KUTZTOWN, Pa. — Philadelphia businessmen and women love their trains.

So much so, in fact, they forced Carl R. Bieber Tourways to drop its fledgling luxury motorcoach service between Philadelphia and Washington D.C. after just nine months. (See Dec. 15, 2004, *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

"In Philly there's this train mentality; they grew up with the train and that's it," said John Kowalski, general manager of Bieber Tourways and the luxury service. Bieber Business Class, as the service was called, has ceased operations after failing to attract riders.

He said that while two or three business people would catch the 27-seat coaches in Allentown, Pa., in the mornings, the stop in Philadelphia was always empty.

"I think between January and September, we took three passengers from Philadelphia and they were people visiting the city who wanted to spend the day in Washington," he said.

Kowalski said the company tried everything from offering free tickets, to Internet specials, to showing off the buses at business gatherings, but was unable to attract any interest from business executives, who were its target audience.

He took one of the three luxury coaches that the company equipped with extra-wide leather seats, satellite televisions, XM radios, power ports for laptop computers, Internet access and other amenities to conferences in Philadelphia where people could not only sit in it, but get free tickets as well. Still, there were no takers.

"I even went to the Amtrak station and handed out free tickets and couldn't even get a rider," he added.

Kowalski said Amtrak proved to be a tough competitor because of its frequent runs — it makes 12 trips daily between the two cities, charging \$115 each way for its high-speed trains and \$49 for regular coach runs. Bieber offered two round trips on week days and one on Saturdays and charged \$59 each way, which was \$10 less than the price when the service was launched.

The failure to draw business people shocked the company, mostly because there are so many train riders and only about 16 of them needed to switch to the motorcoach for the service to break even.

"Amtrak takes 1,000 to 2,000 people to Washington D.C. from Philadelphia every



day, and all we were trying to get was eight or so to ride each of our buses," he said. "Combine them with the two or three we were getting in Allentown and we would have been OK."

The first-class Prevost coaches used for Bieber Business Class service previously had been used to launch ExecConnect, the ill-fated luxury coach service that operated

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Westours founder Charles West dies

HAINES, Alaska — Charles 'Chuck' West, who founded the company that became Westours and who was a pioneer in developing Alaska as a tourism destination, died here last month. He was 90.

Mr. West was a pilot during World War II. After the war he began flying among remote locations in Alaska.

He went to work for Alaska-based Wien Airlines and began running part-time air excursions. He established his own company and marketed tours of Alaska in the Lower 48 states.

Because tourist facilities were limited in Alaska, Mr. West founded Alaska's first all-tourist hotel chain, established a huge motorcoach operation, and started an inside-passage cruise line.

In 1957, Mr. West combined his operations under the Westours name and the company flourished. In 1973, he sold his controlling interest to Holland America Line.

At 58, however, Mr. West wasn't ready to retire so he started another Alaska travel company-cruise line called Cruise West.

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THE DOCKET

DaimlerChrysler to use SCR in its '10 engines

PAPENBURG, Germany — The head of DaimlerChrysler's commercial vehicle unit says the company has definitely decided to use selective catalytic reduction technology in its buses and trucks to meet U.S. emission rules for 2010 engines.

Andreas Renschler, CEO of DaimlerChrysler Commercial Vehicles Worldwide, said recent experience in Europe, where SCR-based engines have already been introduced, has strengthened the company's resolve to use the technology in the United States.

"SCR is the technology choice for all DaimlerChrysler vehicles in the U.S. for 2010," added Dr. Gerald Weber, executive vice president of the commercial vehicle division.

Renschler and Weber spoke to a group of international journalists. Renschler said he was "confident . . . SCR will be recognized as the leading long-term solution for future emission-control standards."

Engine manufacturers push for cetane hike in diesel fuel

CHICAGO — The Engine Manufacturers Association is pushing oil refiners to raise cetane standards in diesel fuel. But refiners say making such fuel would increase their costs, resulting in higher pump prices.

A higher cetane rating gives diesel fuel better ignition and burning properties.

The EMA has recommended that the American Society for Testing and Materials — the organization that sets the cetane standard — raise diesel fuel to a 43 cetane minimum from the current 40.

The EMA represents the U.S. engine builders on domestic and international public policy, and regulatory and technical issues. Its

N.D. buys mobile inspection rigs

BISMARCK, N.D. — The North Dakota Highway Patrol has put two mobile commercial inspection vehicles into use along the Canadian border.

The patrol said the new vehicles would help assure commercial traffic entering the U.S. is

For some time, DaimlerChrysler has favored SCR technology to meet the tougher emissions standards for 2010 but had not formally declared its intention to use it because of apparent confusion over the position of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Earlier this year, EPA said its position on SCR had been misunderstood.

SCR is controversial because a urea mixture must be used for the technology to work. Renschler said there are 800 service stations in Europe selling urea.

DaimlerChrysler also will use exhaust gas recirculation to meet the 2010 emissions standards. SCR and EGR were developed to reduce NOx emissions. Additionally, the 2010 engines will have particulate traps to filter solids from the exhaust.

In the U.S., DaimlerChrysler sells Setra motorcoaches, Orion transit buses, Thomas Built school buses and Freightliner, Sterling and Western Star brand trucks.

members produce engines used in a broad array of applications, ranging from trucks and buses, to lawn, garden and utility equipment. Or, from Briggs & Stratton, to Volvo Powertrain Corp.

Meanwhile, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality has revised the implementation dates for that state's low-emission diesel fuel rule in the wake of Hurricane Rita.

The updated compliance dates are Oct. 30 for producers and importers, Dec. 15 for distributors and Jan. 30 for retail outlets.

The rule requires that diesel fuel have a minimum cetane level of 48 and a maximum aromatic content of 10 percent.

legitimate and safe. There are 18 U.S.-Canada border crossings in North Dakota.

The trucks are equipped with power-generation and water systems, along with computer and scale equipment, and are designed to be on location for up to two days.

Transits seek charter firms

The following public transit providers have informed the United Motorcoach Association of their intent to provide charter bus service unless willing and able private operators step forward to offer service or to bid on contract opportunities. UMA urges appropriate operators to respond to these notices:

Gladwin County, Mich. Deadline 4 p.m. Nov. 4, 2005. Write to: Dennis Vannest, Transportation Director, Gladwin City-County Transit, 615 Weaver Court, Gladwin, MI 48624. Phone: (989) 426-6751.

Brevard County, Fla. Deadline: 5 p.m. Nov. 7, 2005. Write to: James P. Liesenfelt, Transit Director, Space Coast Area Transit, 401 S. Varr Ave., Cocoa, FL 32922. Phone: (321) 635-7815.

Mason, Manistee, Lake and Oceana, Mich. Deadline: Nov. 8, 2005. Write to: Yates Dial-A-Ride, Attn. Charter Service Public Notice, P.O. Box 147, Idlewild, MI 49642. Phone: (231) 7322.

Schuylkill County, Pa. Deadline: Nov. 16, 2005. Write to: Mike Micko, Director of Transit Operations, Schuylkill Transportation System, P.O. Box 67, St. Clair, PA 17970. Phone: (570) 429-2701.

Three states fail to fix CDL laws

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration says three states have missed the deadline for making required changes to their laws governing commercial driver licenses.

The states were supposed to adapt to federal legislation that mandates heightened safety regulations and more stringent requirements for commercial drivers.

Under regulations that took effect at the end of September, motorcoach and truck drivers who receive two violations involving major traffic offenses, including driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol while operating a personal vehicle, would permanently lose their commercial driver licenses.

The FMCSA spokeswoman declined to name the three states.

USDOT spending bill likely to prompt battle

WASHINGTON — Congress has begun work on the fiscal 2006 spending bill for the U.S. Department of Transportation and there appears to be a growing likelihood it will be targeted for cuts to offset reconstruction costs from hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The House already has passed its version of the appropriation bill that rolls spending for USDOT, the U.S. Treasury, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development into one piece of legislation.

An effort was being made in the Senate to make its version of the bill parallel to that of the House by also including spending for the District of Columbia.

Reconciling differences between the House and Senate versions of the bills is what is expected to touch-off fireworks.

There is a movement in the House to rescind about \$24 billion in transportation-related projects that were included in the six-year highway and public transit reauthorization bill adopted by Congress and signed into law by President

Bush this past summer. The money would be used to help pay for the massive rebuilding occurring along the storm-ravaged Gulf Coast.

Another contentious issue — as it is each year — is expected to be the size of the appropriation for Amtrak. Senate appropriators want \$1.45 billion for Amtrak in FY 2006, while the House has okayed \$1.176 billion.

The Bush Administration has requested \$350 million for the rail line and is making noises about a veto if Congress doesn't substantially reform Amtrak. Given Congress' record on the issue, neither significant cuts nor reform seems probable.

The Senate version of the bill does contain some interesting Amtrak-related spending requirements. Six months after enactment, Amtrak would no longer be able to use taxpayer funds to subsidize the cost of providing food service on its trains and would be prohibited from using federal money to subsidize sleeper car service on long-distance trains.

Maryland State Police ticket coach for being overweight

LINTHICUM HEIGHTS, Md. — A New England motorcoach operator was given a citation late last month at a Maryland weigh station for being overweight.

Such citations are increasingly rare and the incident may have resulted from an inexperienced scale operator failing to consider the coach's tag axle.

Al McCardell, administrative officer for commercial vehicle weight enforcement for the Maryland State Police said motorcoaches are routinely weighed at scales — just like over-the-road trucks.

Another official in the commercial vehicle enforcement division of the State Police said weight

limits remain law in Maryland, even though they are no longer enforced on federal highways.

"They're still the law on our books," said the official.

The weight limit in Maryland is 22,400 pounds per axle and 34,000 pounds for the dual axles of a coach equipped with a tag axle. It appears the coach that was cited was not given credit for having a tag axle, which McCardell says should have occurred.

Coach operators cited for being overweight in Maryland should contact the government and industry relations department at the United Motorcoach Association. Phone: (800) 424-8262.

Oregon to scan faces for CDL

SALEM, Ore. — Commercial vehicle drivers applying for or renewing a CDL in Oregon will have their facial features read by biometric scanners as part of an effort to fight identify theft.

The Oregon Department of Motor Vehicles said the system will be in place by the end of 2007.

The program also will apply to individuals seeking to renew or apply for a regular driver license.

Greyhound, Velocity Express establish new delivery service

DALLAS — Greyhound Lines has teamed up with one of the nation's largest time-critical delivery networks to provide a new priority package-delivery service between three large metropolitan areas.

Initially, the service is being operated between New York City and Boston; New York City and Philadelphia, and Dallas and Houston. However, plans call for adding more city pairs in the coming months.

Called Metro-to-Metro Guaranteed Package Delivery Today, the service teams up Greyhound PackageXpress, the package-delivery unit of Greyhound Lines, and Velocity Express Corp. of West-

port, Conn., which is the 70th largest for-hire trucking company in North America.

Velocity said the service leverages Greyhound's round-the-clock schedule of intercity departures and ample cargo space on its buses with Velocity's door-to-door pick

up and delivery capabilities.

Metro-to-Metro will be offered in two levels: One service will guarantee door-to-door pick up and delivery within 10 hours, while the other will guarantee overnight service with delivery as early as 6:30 a.m.

The companies expect to compete with other package delivery services on the basis of price and giving users more flexibility with late evening pickups and early morning deliveries.

"This is the new concept of package delivery," said Vincent

Wasik, Velocity's chief executive. "It uses the successful low-cost airlines strategy of picking key city pairs, with strong demand . . . Our focus will be on (cities) generally within 300 miles of each other."

For more information, go to www.metroto.metro.com.

Trailways acts to boost brand

FAIRFAX, Va. — Directors of the Trailways Transportation System have approved a set of recommendations aimed at strengthening the integrity of the Trailways brand.

The board acted on recommendations made by the Trailways Marketing Council, which has responsibility for elevating and maintaining the Trailways brand. The council is composed of Trailways' operator, associate and industry members.

"Trailways is North America's oldest and most-respected network of independent companies," said Bill Steele, chairman of the Trailways' board.

"Travelers around the world regard our brand synonymous with safety, security, service quality, reliability and superb customer support in providing highway passenger transport and other travel-related services," said Steele. "It is our intent to thwart any compromises against the strength and integrity of the brand as we launch our next 70 years."

Trailways will be 70 years old next year.

The list of "brand-aid" recommendations unanimously adopted by the Trailways board includes strict enforcement of member-operators' stockholder and licensee agreements which outline, in detail, an operator's rights, privileges, rules, regulations, and requirements for affiliating with the Trailways network.

"Our brand continues to appreciate in value, unlike other operational assets in our industry," said Steele. "Companies which operate under the Trailways name boost their market recognition, obtain more business, and enjoy greater return on their investments."



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New Orleans

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The company also is working with several colleges in the area in preparation for bidding on campus shuttle work they will need when they reopen in January.

"But we haven't seen any sight-seeing business, yet, because most of the people here right now are not tourists," Burg explains.

Hotard Coaches

Hotard Coaches, which lost 20 of its 74 buses and had its offices and yard damaged, stayed in business just about the entire time, says Roger Hiatt, contract manager. The company moved its operations into a hotel for several weeks immediately after the storm and now is working out of an office trailer that it moved onto its yard.

Hiatt said Hotard has kept busy shuttling cleanup and repair crews around the area and transporting office workers who are temporarily living outside the city to their jobs in the city. In addition, he said the company has been working some charters that were booked before the storm. "We're hanging in there," he says.

Gray Line Tours

Gray Line Tours of New Orleans, which leases coaches from Hotard, a half owner of the tour company, is back in business after being shut down for several weeks following the storm, according to manager Greg Hoffman. But, he notes, the demand for tours has not yet returned.

"We've tried to start up with a few tours but have not been very successful," he explains, adding that few tourists are in town and most of the hotels in the city are filled with relief workers involved in cleanup and repair efforts.

Hoffman says he's shooting for business to pick up after Jan. 1, the date the city has targeted for it to begin welcoming tourists back to the city. "We'll be ready to go when the city is ready and the demand is here," he adds. "We're chomping at the bit right now."

Meantime, he says the company could draw some tour business from the relief workers and their families. "Even they need a day off here and there, and we're hearing that some of their spouses are starting to come in on the weekends," he says.

Mardi Gras a go for '06

NEW ORLEANS — Organizers of New Orleans' Mardi Gras are saying the show will go on next year, despite Hurricane Katrina's widespread destruction in the city.

Tourism officials, float builders and parade hosts told the city council that the annual pre-Lent

celebration must return in February. They're hoping the event will give the city a much-needed boost.

The organizers say about 25 groups are planning to stage parades, but they haven't yet offered specifics about scaling back the festival.

Starcoach

Henry Smith, owner of Starcoach Inc., was among the lucky operators. Although his company suffered some minor damage, none of his eight buses was damaged and he had his tour buses back on the road after the storm.

He did some evacuation work early on and now is helping shuttle work crews. However, he's also taking foreign visitors on music tours to Nashville and Memphis under a seven-month contract he has with a tour company in England. "It had been a three-city tour with jazz, blues and country music, but we had to drop New Orleans from the loop," he explains.

In addition, Starcoach is back running area residents and visitors

to casinos. "The minute things started clearing up, the die-hard casino people were back at it," says Smith.

He hasn't had any difficulty finding drivers and his regular employees stuck with him during the down time and now are all back on the job. "Even though some of them lost their homes, they're here," he says. "I have some very fine people working for me."

Causey Bus Service

Causey Bus Service owner Bill Causey got a lift from another motorcoach company — Collier Tours in Baton Rouge — after he lost his home, his office and seven of his 10 coaches.

Collier gave Causey office

space and is handling any overflow business of its own by leasing Causey's remaining buses. "We've had a relationship with them for a long time and we were very glad to help out," said Rick Washington, a Collier spokesman.

Causey says he picked up a small amount of shuttle work from the federal government, but has had no other business since the storm. "We just don't have anything going on in New Orleans right now," he says.

Meantime, he stresses he's grateful for the help from Collier, but is eager to get back to New Orleans and restart his business. "We're hoping to get back there as soon as we can."

Luxury

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

for nine months between Pittsburgh and Cleveland. ExecConnect was suspended in July 2002.

Meantime, Bieber Tourways is marketing the upscale coaches for corporate trips and luxury tours and charters.

"But, if someone came along and said they needed three buses, we would sell them," Kowalski said.

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Security workshops get off to slow start

TRENTON, N.J. — The first in a series of motorcoach industry Security and Emergency Preparedness Planning workshops being conducted this fall at locations across the U.S. got extremely high marks from those attending.

The only problem: Practically no one from the motorcoach industry showed up — even though the workshop was free.

One who did attend was Sam Sullivan of Trans-Bridge Bus Lines in Bethlehem, Pa., and had great things to say about it.

“It was very good; very informative. It gave us the tools needed to create an emergency preparedness plan.”

But Trans-Bridge was one of only three coach companies represented at the session, which is being presented by the American Bus Association and the United Motorcoach Association, and financed by a grant the associations received from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Co-sponsoring the Trenton workshop was the Greater New Jersey Motorcoach Association.

Other state associations or motorcoach groups will co-sponsor the other workshops in coming weeks.

For Sullivan, the poor turnout marked a disappointing introduction to the motorcoach industry. He was hired by Trans-Bridge about six weeks ago to create an emergency preparedness plan and coordinate security efforts at the regional coach company.

Sullivan recently retired after 24 years from the Allentown (Pa.) Police Department, where he was a criminal investigator.

He encouraged other motorcoach companies to send a representative to one of the remaining workshops. He noted that all future federal bus security grants will require companies to have an emergency and security plan modeled after the one presented at the workshop.

“They need to get on the bus or get under the bus,” Sullivan said.

The workshops are designed specifically to assist motorcoach operators develop security and emergency preparedness plans.

Daecher Consulting Group of Camp Hill, Pa., is organizing the forums for the ABA and UMA.

One association executive who attended the Trenton workshop said the material presented by Daecher was top-notch and included modules on the elements necessary to develop a well-conceived security and emergency preparedness plan:

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

There is no fee to attend the day-and-a-half workshops, which are targeted to coach company owners, safety and security managers, and other management personnel. Daecher says anyone in the industry who has an interest in attending may do so. “The only requirement is that anyone who attends completes a registration form.”

Questions about the workshops should be directed to the

Daecher Consulting Group at (717) 975-9190, or e-mail security@safetyteam.com.

Here’s the remaining workshop schedule:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 operators given grants

WASHINGTON — The Office for Domestic Preparedness, a unit of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, has awarded grants to 25 motorcoach operators, totaling \$9,657,138, under the 2005 Intercity Bus Security Grant Program.

The program provides money to be used for passenger and baggage screening, improvements to bus facility security, and systems to monitor, track and communicate with coaches. The money also may be used for training. The grant winners were selected through a competitive application process.

The program places a strong emphasis on providing resources that will help intercity coach operators better prevent and detect possible explosive devices, as well as chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear agents.

Grants totaling \$10 million in FY 2004 and \$5 million in FY 2003 were previously awarded.

Here’s a list of the companies getting the grants:

Academy Express	\$267,279
Bonanza Bus Lines	\$22,500
Burlington Stage Lines	\$117,254
Capitol Bus Company	\$98,274
Coach USA/Rockland	\$305,938
CUSA / El Espresso	\$61,725
CUSA / Gulf Coast	\$107,153
CUSA / Kerrville Bus	\$21,752
CUSA / K-T	\$18,175
CUSA/ GCBS	\$68,612
Frank Martz Coach Co.	\$131,300
Greyhound Lines	\$5,471,365
Hampton Jitney	\$46,908
International Bus Svc	\$491,795
Jefferson Lines	\$353,439
Lakefront Lines	\$249,492
Lakeland Bus Lines	\$88,610
Olympia Trails Bus	\$494,945
Peter Pan Bus Lines	\$142,500
Plymouth & Brockton Rwy	\$140,949
Van Galder Bus	\$112,500
Trans-Bridge Lines	\$466,611
Vermont Transportation	\$125,000
Wickkiser Int’l Co.	\$123,060
Wisconsin Coach Lines	\$130,000

Security grant program continues to rile industry

WASHINGTON — Top officials at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security will be made aware of the motorcoach industry’s continuing unhappiness over the decision to award bus security grants only to fixed-route operators, a high-ranking DHS official has promised.

Al Martinez-Fonts, special assistant to the Homeland Security secretary for the private sector, made the commitment during a meeting last month with members of the American Bus Association board of directors.

Martinez-Fonts told the ABA board he was aware the industry was disappointed with the department’s decision on how to allocate bus security grants, adding that he would act as the industry liaison and make sure to represent the industry position to top officials at the department.

Last April, when the Department of Homeland Security announced it was awarding \$9.66 million in bus security grants this year, it said the only companies eligible to apply would be fixed-route operators.

Tour-and-charter operators were specifically excluded.

The ABA and the United Motorcoach Association reacted to the announcement with outrage, saying it made little sense to shut out more than 95 percent of the industry from the program. (See May 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Despite the criticism, the DHS staff has remained firm in its position, believing charters and tours pose little security risk since most individuals on board know one another or are part of the same organization that chartered the

coach.

ABA and UMA argue that charter and tour buses, which carry millions of passengers annually and travel to destinations or to points of interest that are national icons, should also have access to grant money.

In other words, how smart is it to exclude tour buses when they park next to landmark memorials, buildings and gathering places in Washington and elsewhere?

Still, all 25 of the companies receiving fiscal 2005 grants are intercity operators.

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ISSUE NO. 65

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED MOTORCOACH ASSOCIATION

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Valuable educational sessions on tap at Expo 2006

TAMPA, Fla. — Motorcoach Expo 2006 will feature a series of hard-hitting educational seminars designed to help coach company owners and managers develop specific strategies to make their operations more successful.

The two days of workshops and panel discussions will operate on the premise that no two companies are alike and that what makes one company perform better may not work for another.

So, the "Solution Sessions" at Expo 2006 will focus on helping companies find their own particular "Road to Success." Sessions will direct owners and operators to look closely inside their companies and to focus on the individual characteristics — culture, values, markets, financials, equipment and customers — that make them unique.

By determining their company's strengths, weaknesses and needs, operators can use the Expo seminars and discussions to begin charting their own path to success. Here's a list of the Solution Sessions scheduled for Expo '06:

Thursday, Jan. 19

9–10 a.m. New Business Opportunities Analysis

Should you pursue a new business opportunity or continue with the tried and true? Learn how to identify, develop and capitalize on new business opportunities. A panel of motorcoach industry executives will present a model financial analysis and risk assessment, demonstrating how to take into account changes to current business cost structures, revenue sources, markets and the like. Learn how to make better and smarter decisions for the future of your business.

10–10:45 a.m. Legislative and Regulatory Update

An expert in government and industry relations will address the current legislative and regulatory environment and how these issues impact the coach industry, at both the federal and state levels. Topics may include:

- Update on ADA rules that go into effect for 2006-07.
- Explanation of the new federal highway reauthorization legislation and a discussion of the rule-making called for in the new law.
- Brief presentations from both the Small Business Administration and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

Concurrent Morning Sessions

11 a.m.–Noon. Marketing and Sales: Easy to Use Market Research Techniques

Get focused on your company's unique market and successfully meet the demands of your customers. In this exceptional session, learn how to better understand your

particular market, your customers' changing needs and changes in the market that may lead to new opportunities. Discover straightforward market research techniques that are easy to use for everyone.

11 a.m.–Noon. Finance: Developing and Implementing a Comprehensive Business Plan

Specially designed for small motorcoach companies. A panel composed of owners of small companies will discuss how they developed all-inclusive business plan. Find out what components were successful and what elements did not work. From the experiences of others, learn how to develop your own business plan to chart a successful course for your company.

11 a.m.–Noon. Operations: How To Adopt a Fuel Surcharge

Diesel fuel prices have skyrocketed and little or no relief is in sight. Learn how to implement a fuel surcharge to cover increasing fuel costs. A must-attend session for any operator interested in protecting its bottom line.

Noon–1:45 p.m. Operator Luncheon: Leadership Lessons

Steve Farber, former vice president of The Tom Peters Company, will speak on the concept of LEAP, a lesson in "extreme leadership." Geared to business leaders at any organizational level, this session will help you lead your company down the road to success. Find out what it means to take the Radical LEAP into leadership by cultivating love, generating energy, inspir-

ing audacity, and providing proof.

Concurrent Afternoon Sessions

2–3 p.m. Marketing and Sales: Follow-up on Lessons in Leadership — Applications

If you enjoyed Steve Farber's after-lunch presentation and want to learn more, this session takes a look at real-world applications of LEAP. Leadership is the foundation of a strong company and essential to the success of any business. Learn new ways to lead your company to a bright future.

2–4:15 p.m. Finance: What Worked in the Past May Not Work in the Future.

Changing business practices does not mean you have to change corporate principles and values. Popular returning speaker Duane Spader discusses how to make business management and development changes to build a consensus within your management team and move your company forward — profitably.

2–4:15 p.m. Operations: Driver Regs and Employment Law

In this presentation, an industry expert discusses driver regulations. Then, get all the basics on hiring, firing and everything in-between for small-and-midsize operators from a leading labor and employment attorney.

3:15–4:15 p.m. Marketing and Sales: Developing an Easy-to-Implement Marketing Plan

Specially designed for small motorcoach companies. Want to

develop a marketing plan that fits your company? Learn how to take your company's unique characteristics and situation into account to develop and implement a best-fit marketing plan for success.

Friday, Jan. 20

Concurrent Morning Sessions

8:30–9:30 a.m. Marketing: Developing Packaged Travel

Is packaged travel right for your company? Hear from other operators about the ins and outs of packaged travel. Learn how to work with tour operators to create win-win business relationships and develop the right product for your company. And, decide how much of your product mix should include packaged travel.

8:30–9:30 a.m. Finance: Building a School Bus Business

Is your school bus business as strong as you want it to be? This informative session will focus on effective strategies for marketing your school bus business, working with school-district clients, and the programs you should have in place to make your school bus business more successful.

8:30–9:30 a.m. Operations: 2007 Engine Requirements

The 2007 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency requirements for diesel engine emissions are a growing concern for the entire industry. The changes will affect important decisions your company will have to make. A panel composed of representatives of the engine manufacturers and OEMs

will discuss the new requirements. All of your questions will be answered.

9:30–10:30 a.m. Marketing and Sales: Selling Group Travel

Want to learn the best way to find group leaders? Need help with pricing strategies? Learn from a panel of industry leaders who successfully sell group travel. Discover how they do it, plus suggestions for marketing, pricing and customer development.

9:30–10:30 a.m. Finance: Buying Coaches — Understanding Replacement Costs

This valuable session provides a financial assessment of purchasing a pre-owned versus a new coach. A must-attend session for coach operators to learn about many of the variables that factor into the buying decision. For example, how to gauge customer requirements. Build a plan that is right for your company by taking your market into account and assessing the costs and benefits of buying a new or a pre-owned coach.

9:30–10:30 a.m. Operations: How to Obtain School District Contracts

Faced with the challenge of winning school district customers? This seminar will provide you with helpful tips and guidelines on "getting in the door," negotiating contracts with school district officials, and building "win-win" relationships with school district customers.

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Public policy

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

issue a cease-and-desist order and hope the transit agency obeyed the order, or to withhold the agency's federal funding. The FTA didn't have the backbone to withhold money.

The new law allows the Department of Transportation to mete out punishments that fit the crime. In other words, the law provides flexibility in administering

penalties for charter service violations.

The motorcoach associations intend to write a letter to the USDOT and encourage it to impose a penalty of up to \$1,000 per bus per day when it's determined a transit agency has engaged in a continuing pattern of charter service violations.

The letter also will urge the DOT to begin dealing quickly with the issue and all of the provisions of the new law. The associations

have a legal opinion that says the DOT does not have to issue new rules to begin enforcing the law.

Letters also will be going to the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the USDOT regarding their management of emergency evacuations. Prompting the letters, of course, was the bungled evacuations of New Orleans and other Gulf Coast areas following Hurricane Katrina.

The letters will address the issues of emergency evacuation

planning; pricing of evacuation bus services; taking care of drivers who operate coaches used in evacuations; the use of staging areas, and the framework for managing evacuation operations. The associations will seek input into the process.

Those letters will go out over the signatures of Victor Parra, CEO of UMA, and Peter Pantuso, CEO of ABA.

As for the fuel-related issues addressed by the associations, the group will seek to separate the motorcoach industry from idling provisions developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for over-the-road trucks.

UMA has been charged with developing a White Paper on the issue of biodiesel fuel. The associations are concerned about a wide range of issues related to biodiesel. (See Oct. 15 issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

"There is no clear definition (of biodiesel) and there are no federal standards," said Parra. "From a public policy standpoint, there are a lot of touch points," he added.

The associations also will jump

into the issue of the apparent increasing number of prohibitions against motorcoaches using high-occupancy vehicle lanes in major urban areas.

Last on the public policy hit parade is the pending negotiated rulemaking to develop federal rules covering public transit agencies providing charter service to community officials and nonprofit organizations.

The new federal highway and public transit reauthorization law contains a provision calling for the negotiated rulemaking by the FTA.

Many in the motorcoach industry see the rulemaking as a potential landmine, and the associations attending the public policy session will work with the larger Coalition of Private Transportation Associations, which includes organizations representing school bus, paratransit, taxicab, shuttle and limousine operators, to develop the positions that will be pushed during the rulemaking.

"What do we want? and what do we want to avoid?" was how Brown described the process of preparing for the rulemaking.

ABA board to get tour operators

WASHINGTON — The American Bus Association has created six slots on its board of directors for tour operators.

The ABA said its board added the new seats in recognition of the valuable and important role tour operators play in the group travel industry, as well as in the associa-

tion.

The move increases the size of the ABA board to 50 members. Other segments of the board are bus operators, associates, travel industry representatives, and two nonvoting members.

Nominations for the tour operator seats are being sought.



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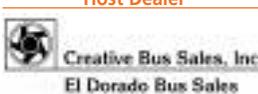



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New York places largest-ever hybrid-electric bus order

NEW YORK CITY — DaimlerChrysler Commercial Buses North America has received the largest order ever for hybrid buses, with New York City Transit and its sister agency, MTA Bus, ordering 500 Orions. The value of the contract is roughly \$250 million.

Under the deal, 216 Orion VII hybrid-electric buses will go to 20 groups

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

in the program will join what are called Spader Management Groups that consist of up to 20 noncompeting coach companies. No UMA members who compete with each other on a daily basis will be in the same group.

The 50-member IMG has two 20 Groups operating within its membership.

Each 20 Group that's formed from among UMA members will meet from two to four times annually to discuss their businesses and exchange ideas. Most meetings are held near a member business so the group can visit the host member's facility.

Additionally, each member submits monthly financial information that's then provided to all 20 members in a consolidated report.

The opportunity to compare results with industry peers is a distinctive feature of 20 Groups. The Spader approach accommodates all accounting systems and the company provides participants with custom software that makes the monthly reporting requirement automatic.

Discussions about practical business challenges and solutions in each 20 Group are based on the facts and figures that come from the member business.

A primary benefit of membership is learning how the monthly figures can be used to support individual business decisions and increase company profit potential. "It helps each member be more successful," says Milton Ellis of the Spader organization.

Companies are assigned to a group based on sales volume, location, personal preference and a "personal fit" with other members of the group. There is no size-of-revenue requirement for participation in a 20 Group.

UMA members interested in possibly participating in a 20 Group should watch the association newsletter, *The Exchange*, or call UMA at (800) 424-8262. For information about the Spader organization go to www.spader.com.

New York City Transit, beginning in the second quarter of next year, while MTA Bus will get 284 units.

MTA Bus was formed in September 2004, to take over the operation of seven private bus companies that provided commuter service in New York boroughs on a contract basis with the New York City Department of

Transportation.

New York City Transit is the nation's largest bus operation, with a fleet of more than 4,500 operating in five boroughs of the city.

The contract for the 500 diesel-electric hybrids has an option for up to 389 additional Orion VIIIs that DaimlerChrysler expects will be exercised in the future.

The order is the third for hybrid buses by New York City. The first, for 125, was four years ago, and that was followed by a second order in 2002 for 200 units. All of those buses have been delivered.

"Orion has established itself as the leading manufacturer of diesel electric hybrid buses in North America," said Andy Strecker,

chief executive of DaimlerChrysler Commercial Buses North America.

"We're proud to continue our partnership with New York City Transit and MTA Bus as we have mutually pioneered the hybrid transit market into a viable propulsion option for city buses," added Patrick Scully, chief commercial officer of DCCBNA.

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