

# Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY



Many private operators, like Premier Coach of Vermont, are continuing to buy new buses. See story on Page 6.

## New coach sales remain healthy

For the second consecutive quarter, purchases by private bus operators pushed deliveries of new motorcoaches to about the same level as a year ago.

A total of 439 new coaches were sold during the three months ended Sept. 30, down just 4 percent, or 18 buses, from the 457 coaches sold during the third quarter of 2007.

Given the widespread uncertainty in the general economy, the motorcoach industry's third quarter sales record was a bright spot.

*National Bus Trader* magazine, which serves as the industry clearing house for new motorcoach sales figures, said this year's third quarter was atypical because of the mix of coaches sold during the period.

For example, new coach sales

in Canada were higher than usual, and there was a greater percentage of coaches built in Europe — Van Hools and Setras — sold during the quarter than is typical.

At the same time, public sector coach sales dropped during the third quarter, as did sales of conversion shells and coaches equipped with ZF AS-tronic transmissions.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 ►

## MCI says customer support strong

SCHAUMBURG, Ill. — Motor Coach Industries says it has received strong support from customers during the nearly two months since it filed for Chapter 11 reorganization.

Company President and CEO Tom Sorrells also says actions by the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Delaware assure MCI will be able to continue to honor coach warranties and other customer programs and services without interruption.

“Court approval to continue customer programs and honor standard limited warranties is ex-

cellent news for our customers, who have been extremely supportive of MCI through the initial weeks of this process,” said Sorrells.

The comments by Sorrells came in the wake of key bankruptcy court rulings that move the company's plan of reorganization forward.

“We are very pleased with the bankruptcy court's decision to grant final approval of these motions, which are critical to MCI implementing our voluntary financial restructuring,” said Sorrells.

“Full access to our financing facility will provide MCI the added liquidity to reimburse vendors and continue customer support programs and assembly operations without interruption.

“We remain focused on executing our plan to emerge from Chapter 11 by February 2009,” Sorrells added.

MCI and its U.S. subsidiaries filed voluntary petitions for Chapter 11 reorganization on Sept. 15. MCI's filing did not include its Canadian operations.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8 ►

## FTA orders transit systems to cease charter operations

WASHINGTON — In two disputes involving public transit agencies providing charter bus service, the Federal Transit Administration has ruled in favor of the private bus operators who filed complaints.

In one of the rulings, the FTA said the private operator suffered financial losses when the transit authority tried to circumvent the federal charter rule that went into effect April 30.

The FTA issued “cease-and-desist” orders for Louisville, Ky., and Clemson, S.C., requiring the transit authorities there to halt charter services.

In both cases, the local transit authorities took on contracts that should have been negotiated with private operators. In one case, the operator had to take pictures of a transit authority bus in action to re-

fute claims by the transit authority that it wasn't running an illegal charter operation.

“We are delighted we were able to acquire the necessary evidence, and with the help of (the United Motorcoach Association), bring the illegal operations of Clemson Area Transit to light,” said Jean Cauley, president of Jean's Bus Service of Greenville, S.C.

“We are pleased the FTA has ruled that the service is in violation of the charter service rule and CAT can no longer provide it. It is important for charter operators to be alert and not let these types of services by transits slide.”

Jean's Bus Service requested an advisory opinion from the FTA when it lost a parking lot shuttle contract with Foothills YMCA to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14 ►

## Baltimore coach operators band together for shuttle

BALTIMORE — Seven central Maryland motorcoach operators have joined forces to provide shuttle bus service this fall for Baltimore Ravens football games, and to develop other business that leverages their new-found cooperative strength.

By taking over the Ravens' shuttle the coach operators are taking advantage of an opening created by this year's overhaul of the federal charter bus rules.

Lori Parr, of Bill Rohrbaugh Charter Service in Manchester, reports an increase of 100 percent in company jobs during Ravens' home-game weekends because of the coach operators' joint arrangement with the National Football League team.

That means Rohrbaugh's work went from six runs to 12 during those weeks, all because of the revised Federal Transit Administration rule that requires public transit authorities to give private companies first crack at charter work. The rule went into effect April 30.

“We're glad the federal law brought us this extra work,” said Parr.

“We realize this is happening all over the nation and the fight that is happening (during) the transition,” said Parr, who is charter sales manager at Bill Rohrbaugh Charter Service.

Parr has registered her employer's company with the FTA around the nation to track how other areas

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10 ►

THE 2009 MCI® J4500  
NOW AVAILABLE



MOTOR COACH  
INDUSTRIES

SMOOTH.  
SMART.  
SOPHISTICATED.

CALL 1-877 - I BUY MCI (428-9624)



# Ready For Delivery— Quality Pre-Owned Equipment

from the Nation's #1 Pre-Owned Equipment Dealer



**Bluebird LTC40**



**Dina Viaggio w/Lift**



**Setra S217**



**Krystal KK38**



**MCI 102C3**

## **PASSENGER COACHES**

- **1998 Bluebird LTC 40 (2) \$79,900 ea.**  
New Paint / 1 Owner  
Vin# 1BAGNB5A7WF079292
- **1999 Dina Viaggio 1000 \$74,900**  
ADA  
Vin# 3ABBBFHA9XS002158
- **1995 Setra S217HDH \$44,900**  
West Coast Vehicle  
Vin# WKK138TAXS1030417
- **2006 Krystal KK38 \$109,900**  
1 Owner / Clean as New  
Save \$60K from New!  
Vin# 1HVBTAAN36H265273
- **1990 MCI 102C3 \$37,500**  
1 Owner / West Coast Vehicle  
New Audio/Video!  
Vin# 1TUGCH8A2LR007713
- **Financing Available\***

**For details call Peter Oakman at 800-322-2877 x723**

**Customer Satisfaction  
is our highest priority...**

Used vehicles sold "as-is."  
Actual coach may vary from photo.  
No warranties expressed or implied.  
\*Financing available to qualified customers.



Exclusive U.S.  Distributor

*Many Solutions. One Direction.*

**MIDWEST** 800-222-2875   **NORTHEAST** 800-222-2873   **SOUTHEAST** 800-222-2871   **SOUTHWEST** 800-222-2877   **WESTERN** 800-322-2877

View hundreds of other pre-owned equipment at  
[www.abc-companies.com](http://www.abc-companies.com)

## Texas steps up search for rogue bus operators

AUSTIN, Texas — Concerned about a multi-fatality motorcoach accident involving a rogue bus company this past summer, transportation authorities here have stepped up their hunt for other unsafe bus companies that might be operating in the state.

The state Department of Transportation is attempting to contact the owners of the more than 200 motorcoach companies that lost their state operating authority during the past 24 months to determine if any of them are still in business and operating illegally.

The companies lost their operating rights for a variety of reasons, including allowing their liability insurance to lapse, failing to re-register their buses, closing their businesses, and driver and vehicle safety violations, said Robert Anderson of the agency's motor carrier operations section.

Many of the revocations occurred, he said, because the operators failed to maintain their insurance, although some of them renewed their policies days or weeks later and continued to operate in good standing. It is not known how many had safety or driver issues that resulted in revocations.

The research was ordered by the transportation department following an Aug. 8 accident in which a motorcoach blew a tire near the town of Sherman, north of Dallas, and overturned, killing 18 passengers and injuring 30 others, a number of them critically.

Investigators said the coach belonged to Iguala Busmex, a Houston-based company formed three days earlier by an operator who had recently had his operating authority revoked for another company because of safety violations.

Within weeks of the accident, two other companies were shut down because of their affiliation with revoked companies.

The situation with rogue companies, especially the deadly bus accident, troubled transportation authorities and led to the order to check all companies that had been put out of service in an attempt to identify and locate any other unlicensed carriers that might be operating in the state.

"We wanted to be proactive," said Christy Bird of the transportation department's registration section.

To operate in Texas, motorcoach companies are required to carry between \$1 million and \$5 million in liability insurance, pay one-time fees of \$200, and register their coaches annually for \$10

each. As of late August, there were about 360 motorcoach companies with 4,700 coaches registered in the state.

Anderson said that while the review of the 200 companies is well under way, a running account of the number of owners who have been located and those that continued to operate without regulatory authority is not being kept.

"We don't have all of the answers yet," he said, adding that no deadline has been set to complete the study.

Anderson said companies caught operating without regulatory authority will be ordered to register with the state — if they want to remain in business. They also could be assessed an administrative fine for failing to register and be penalized for possible safety violations if any of their coaches are found to be unsafe.

"We look at the reason and if there are no accidents or public harm issues and they act quickly to get back in, then all they might get is a formal letter of warning," he said. "For more extreme measures, our investigative and enforcement people can fine them or order them out of service."

He noted that while the records

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8 ▶

## Safety videos/info proliferate

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has issued a slew of new materials aimed at helping motorcoach operators provide pre-trip safety information to their passengers.

At the same time, the United Motorcoach and American Bus associations, plus leading industry insurer Lancer Insurance Co., also have introduced new videos that meet FMCSA requirements for passenger safety briefings.

The new FMCSA brochures, poster and audio file, and the new videos from the associations and Lancer, come roughly one year after the safety agency issued guidelines to the motorcoach industry calling on operators to provide their passengers with pre-trip safety information each time a bus is loaded. (See Oct. 1, 2007 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

The FMCSA "strongly encourages" bus and motorcoach companies to provide its — or similar — materials about coach emergency procedures and safety features to passengers before every trip.

Operators "should provide the pre-trip safety information at all major stops or terminals, following passenger boarding, and prior to movement of the vehicle," says the federal safety agency.

The FMCSA did the motorcoach industry something of a

favor last year when it issued its passenger safety "guidance." It could have issued "rules," mandating pre-trip safety briefings and information cards.

Instead, it heeded a recommendation from a special industry committee that urged the FMCSA to come up with recommended guidelines — rather than hard-and-fast rules — that operators could adapt to their operations.

The FMCSA has vowed to monitor operators' compliance with its guidance and guidelines, and if it finds that pre-trip safety briefings are not being conducted or safety brochures or cards are not on board coaches, it could issue regulations requiring the safety awareness information.

That sword hanging over the industry accounts in part for UMA, ABA and Lancer coming up with their new materials that help operators comply with the federal safety messaging guidelines.

The newest pre-trip safety video is from UMA, which produced a 3½-minute video, available on DVD, that highlights motorcoach safety features, as well as emergency exits and passenger courtesy.

ABA also has a new video, plus seatback cards and audio CD, carrying safety messages. The ABA video is available in both DVD and VHS formats.

UMA and ABA are selling their videos — both to members and nonmembers — on their websites, [www.UMA.org](http://www.UMA.org) and [www.buses.org](http://www.buses.org).

More than 15 years ago, Lancer Insurance Co. released a "welcome aboard" audio cassette to be played pre-departure for motorcoach passengers. Three years later that audio cassette was converted into a video.

Now, Lancer has released a new version of its welcome aboard video, called Safety In Motion — A Passenger's Guide to a Safe Trip. The Lancer video is unique in that it is available in coach-specific versions.

The FMCSA-compliant video is available for MCI, Prevost, Van Hool and Setra coaches. The company also has a generic version, in both DVD and VHS formats, for companies that operate vehicles from other manufacturers.

Lancer's video is available free to policyholders. "We recommend that a DVD or VHS copy become 'standard equipment' on every insured coach," says Lancer.

Two other motorcoach industry players, International Motor Coach Group and Trailways, also have produced passenger briefing videos for their stockholders and members.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8 ▶



**NATIONAL INTERSTATE**  
Transportation Insurance Specialists

Community & Medical  
Transportation (CMT) Program For:

- ▶ Demand Response & Para Transit Services
- ▶ Non-Emergency Medical Transport
- ▶ Small Urban & Rural Transit Services
- ▶ Social Service Agencies

Contact Us or Have Your Broker Contact Us At:  
Phone: 1-800-931-7080 Fax: 717-766-7081  
[matt.andrews@nationalinterstate.com](mailto:matt.andrews@nationalinterstate.com)

# THE DOCKET

## FMCSA to issue warning about ADA rules

WASHINGTON — All for-hire motorcoach operators in the U.S. will soon be receiving a letter from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration warning them they better be complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements for bus companies or they risk losing their operating authority.

The letter is the first formal acknowledgement by the FMCSA that it plans to begin enforcing requirements of the Over-the-Road Bus Transportation Accessibility Act of 2007 that became law this past summer. (See Sept. 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

The act was pushed through Congress by the American Bus

Association, with help from Greyhound Lines and the Amalgamated Transit Union, to target a few suspected noncompliant intercity carriers, mainly Chinatown curbside operators, running along the northeast corridor. (See Jan. 2008 and Dec. 1 and Dec. 15, 2007 issues of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

While the law targets the Chinatown line-run outfits, it applies to all operators — tour and charter, sightseeing, shuttle, plus intercity.

Those opposing the law, including the United Motorcoach Association, maintained there was no evidence of widespread noncompliance with ADA requirements by bus operators, or

unmet needs that would warrant a new law.

The new one-page letter from the FMCSA should arrive in operator mailboxes at about the same time as this newspaper.

It will point out that if a coach operator is found to have willfully violated ADA regulations covering the handling of passengers with disabilities, it can have its operating authority yanked.

“Consequently, you should review the ADA regulations to ensure your company is able to comply with them,” says the letter signed by FMCSA Associate Administrator for Enforcement and Program Delivery William A. Quade.

The letter also notes that operating authority for new companies can be withheld unless the new operator certifies it will comply with ADA requirements.

The applicability of ADA regulations to coach operators varies depending on company size and type of service provided. Information about the specific requirements can be found at <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/rules-regulations/bus/company/ada-guidelines.htm>.

Last month was the deadline for all bus operators to submit reports to the FMCSA, documenting their compliance with ADA requirements during the 12 months ended Sept. 30, 2008. (See Nov. 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

## Hackers busted for copping IDs from FMCSA

LOS ANGELES — The arraignment late last month of two Russian immigrants who allegedly stole trucking company identities by hacking into federal databases is a fresh reminder that coach operators need to monitor their company information that's posted on fed websites.

Federal prosecutors charged the pair with multiple counts of computer, mail and wire fraud after they allegedly stole trucking company identities out of a Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration database and collected load fees for trips they outsourced to unsuspecting drivers.

Early last year, the pair allegedly hacked the FMCSA Safety and Fitness Electronic Records System, known as SAFER, and registered four trucking and brokerage companies.

The men then changed registration information for other truck and brokerage companies that were already registered on SAFER, creating “the impression that the unrelated companies were affiliated with defendants’ companies,” the federal indictment states.

Later, the pair posed as carriers on various internet load boards, entered contracts with brokers to transport advertised loads and double-brokered the loads to another carrier without telling the original load broker.

Nicholas Lakes, also known as Dmitry Livshits, of Glendale, Calif., and Viacheslav Berkovich of Los Angeles face a slew of federal fraud charges.

The U.S. Department of Transportation’s computer security was recently criticized for a variety of shortcomings by the USDOT Office of Inspector General.

Coach operators should periodically check the Safer and other FMCSA websites to make sure their company information is accurate and complete, including verifying their USDOT numbers.

And operators should always make sure their name, logo and regulatory information is removed from any coach they sell or trade.

## Mike Sodrel loses race to return to Congress

JEFFERSONVILLE, Ind. — Motorcoach operator and Republican Mike Sodrel lost his bid to return to Congress as incumbent Democrat Rep. Baron Hill cruised to victory in Indiana’s 9th district.

Hill won 57 percent of the vote, including Floyd County — Sodrel’s home turf. Reliably Re-

publican Indiana also went with President-elect Obama.

Sodrel conceded the race about three hours after the voting ended.

“I am grateful to my family, friends, and great volunteers that have supported me in this race. I have known victory and I have known defeat. I am at peace with

the outcome,” he said.

Hill and Sodrel were facing off for the fourth consecutive election. Sodrel defeated Hill in 2004 to win his only two-year term in Congress.

Hill, in a move that undercut Sodrel on what might have been the most important issue of the

race, voted against the financial bailout legislation that Congress passed last month. He said hundreds of people made a point to thank him for his vote.

Campaign finance reports show Hill spent \$1.2 million through Sept. 30, while Sodrel spent about \$818,000.

# DUMP VALVE PROBLEMS? YOU'RE NOT USING...



**MANY** OPERATORS ARE EXPERIENCING THIS PROBLEM.  
CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION AND FREE SAMPLES.

UNIT CHEMICAL CORP - (800) 879-8648 - (702) 564-6454 - [www.unitychemical.com](http://www.unitychemical.com)

# NTSB: Restrict cell phone use by motorcoach drivers

Washington — The National Transportation Safety Board has issued its 2009 “Most Wanted List” of safety improvements and newly added to the list is a recommendation to restrict the use of cell phones by motorcoach drivers.

Another important addition to the list this year was to require electronic on-board recorders for all bus and truck operators.

“Our ‘Most Wanted List,’ which was created in 1990, was designed to raise the public’s awareness and support for transportation safety issues,” said NTSB Chairman Mark V. Rosenker.

“The safety issues on this list are critical to improving transportation safety. When acted upon, these recommendations will reduce accidents and save lives.”

In recommending that federal regulatory agencies restrict the use of cellular telephones by motorcoach drivers, the NTSB said research shows that using a cell phone while driving degrades performance, resulting in slower reaction times, slower driving speeds, and increased instances of attention lapses.

Two years ago, the NTSB recommended the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration prohibit

cellular telephone use by commercial driver’s license holders with a passenger-carrying or school bus endorsement, while driving under the authority of that endorsement, except in emergencies.

So far, the FMCSA hasn’t acted on the recommendation, so the NTSB added the recommendation to its most-wanted list.

For more than three decades, the NTSB has advocated the use of on-board recorders for all motor carriers to increase hours-of-service compliance.

The safety board added the on-board recorder issue to its most

wanted list because the FMCSA has proposed a very limited on-board recorder requirement that essentially would mandate recorders only for companies that have shown a propensity for violating hours-of-service rules.

The FMCSA proposal “is not applicable to all operators subject to hours-of-service regulations, does not establish the proper incentives and does not create a level playing field for compliance with the rules,” said the NTSB.

Electronic onboard recorders on all trucks and buses also would result in more accurate data col-

lected on accident conditions, the NTSB noted.

Other items remaining on the most-wanted list that would apply to motorcoach operators include preventing medically unqualified drivers from operating commercial vehicles; enhancing protection for motorcoach and school bus passengers, and preventing collisions by using enhanced vehicle safety technology.

Noted Rosenker: “New technologies like anti-collision devices and electronic stability control are already proving their worth in saving lives on our highways.”

## Fla. to get variable tolling

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — A Spanish construction conglomerate has been selected to lead a \$1.8 billion project to expand Interstate 595 in Broward County, including adopting new variably priced, reversible toll lanes that could open in six years.

Under the proposal, there will be three free travel lanes in each direction, plus a reversible SunPass-only, two-lane tolling area in the center median.

To ease congestion, the two center lanes would operate eastbound in the mornings, providing a straight shot between I-75 to the west and Florida’s Turnpike or State Road 7 in the east, then reverse for the afternoon rush hour.

Prices would rise as the express areas become more congested, and drop as traffic gets lighter.

The SunPass-only tolling area would be built in the center median area and operate similar to the soon-to-open express lanes on Interstate 95 in Miami-Dade County. Prices will rise when congestion is heaviest, and drop during off-peak hours.

Based on the bid, ACS Infraestructores will receive 30 annual payments of \$63.98 million regardless of the tolls collected after the revamped road opens in 2014.

State officials say they are essentially using the private vendor’s financing to get the project finished in one-third of the time.

## Tolls on Maine Turnpike to increase

PORTLAND, Maine — Tolls are being increased by the Maine Turnpike Authority a year ahead of schedule because of declining traffic volume, increasing costs, and the shaky economy.

The turnpike authority board approved increasing revenue by \$20 million, or 23 percent, starting in February, instead of waiting for a scheduled increase in 2010.

Turnpike revenue was projected to increase 2.5 percent this year

but instead declined by 1.7 percent because of a drop in traffic.

The turnpike staff is preparing scenarios for toll increases by vehicle class. The last increase occurred in February 2005.

Should an increase of 23 percent be spread across the board among vehicle classes, the toll for a three-axle motorcoach traveling the turnpike’s full length, from Augusta to Kittery, would increase from \$12 to \$14.76.

## OMCA picks officers, board

TORONTO — Jamie Murray of Parkinson Coach Lines in Brampton, Ont., has been elected 2009 chairman of the Ontario Motor Coach Association.

Other new officers are: John Crowley of Coach Canada, vice chair, and Ray DeNure of DeNure Tours, secretary-treasurer.

Joining the officers on the OMCA executive committee are newly elected members Sue LeClair of Shoreline Tours and Ghislain Leduc of Leduc Bus Lines.

Murray succeeds Dave Willis of Ayr Coach, who remains on the

executive committee.

Newly elected to the OMCA board were Doug Badder of Badder Bus, Mike Burnett of the Niagara CAA, and Mary Mandley of St. Marie among the Hurons.

Re-elected board members were Ron Malette of Tisdale Bus Lines, Rene Poyant of Cape Cod Custom Tours, plus LeClair, Crowley, Leduc and DeNure.

Re-elected at-large directors were Ray Burley of Swiftrans, Allan Cherrey of Cherrey Bus Lines, Wayne Asquith of Asquith Consulting, and Greg Hammond of Hammond Transportation.

## UPGRADE TO LCD MONITORS It's As Easy As 1,2,3,

Replace Your  
CRT Monitors



With A NEW 10.4" LCDs

or...

UPGRADE Your Current  
10.4" LCDs To The  
NEW 15.4" LCD  
WIDESCREENS



www.radioeng.com  
www.BUS-WATCH.com  
1.800.228.9275



## Premier Coach buys 27 Setras

COLCHESTER, Vt. — When Setra introduced its S 417 model five years ago, one of the first operators in line to buy the new coach was Premier Coach of Colchester.

Since then, the tour-and-charter operator has purchased 71 new S 417s.

Now, Premier has made one of the largest S 417 purchases ever — 27 units.

“At Premier Coach we pride ourselves on providing one of the most modern fleets in North America,” said Randy Charlebois, company general manager and vice president. “The Setra S 417 offers unmatched curb appeal in the luxury motorcoach market and we are proud to be one of the largest own-

ers of the Setra S 417 in the country.”

The order gives Premier a total of 38 Setra S 417s in its fleet.

The new coaches are painted silver metallic and are equipped with rear windows, tray tables, and entrance and aisle carpeting.

“Premier Charter has been a long and valued customer of Setra and this recent purchase of 27 Setra S 417 luxury coaches personifies their commitment to providing the absolute best to their customers,” said Tom Chezem, vice president of motorcoach sales for Daimler Buses North America.”

For information about Premier Charter, go to [www.premiercoach.net](http://www.premiercoach.net).

## Bus sales

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“There were only 32 conversion coaches (sold) in this quarter, down to only half of the 64 shells (sold) a year ago in the third quarter of 2007,” said *National Bus Trader* Editor Larry Plachno.

Several groups that track such things report that wealthy and fabulously wealthy individuals are cutting back spending. For example, among families worth \$1 million to \$10 million, 76 percent plan to cut spending, and among those worth at least \$30 million, 29 percent plan to trim their spending.

Other factors believed to be depressing coach shell sales include the absence of new whiz-bang gizmos that excite shell buyers, and fewer music groups touring North America these days.

Regarding public-sector coach purchases, Plachno said that while he does not have accurate figures, “my guesstimate is that in spite of some nice public-sector sales this quarter, we are down approximately 50 public-sector coaches from the third quarter of 2007.

“Hence, it is very obvious that while both public sector and shell sales are down in this third quarter, private-sector sales are up substantially and made up for most of the

loss from the public sector and conversion shells,” he noted.

Trying to fathom the reasons for the increase in private-sector sales was a bit of a challenge for Plachno. “What may be happening,” he said, “is that in spite of (or because of) the economy, several operators are doing well and are upgrading or expanding their fleet. I noticed several nice orders that came through recently, including an unusually high number from Canada.”

Second-quarter new coach sales also were bolstered by private operator purchases. (See Sept. 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Another notable change occurring during this year's third quarter was the coach model that was the industry's best-seller. In recent years, MCI's J4500 has been the top-selling coach but that changed in the third quarter when MCI's best-selling coach ever, the D4500, climbed back to the No. 1 spot as a result of public sector sales. The J4500 was No. 2.

The other top five selling coaches (in order) during the third quarter were the Prevost H3-45; Van Hool C2045, Setra S 417; MCI D4505 and Prevost X3-45.

Sales of new coaches into Canada totaled 76 buses, or 17.3 percent of the total, during this year's

third quarter. That compares to third quarter 2007 Canadian new coach sales of 25, or 5.5 percent of the market.

A total of 112 imported coaches — Setras and Van Hools — were sold in this year's third quarter, or 25.5 percent of the total. That compares to 103 imported coaches, or 22.5 percent of the market, in the third quarter of 2007.

“While 25.5 percent is relatively high for imports, it is explained by the reduced public-sector and conversion-shell sales that are primarily domestic,” Plachno pointed out.

ZF auto-stick transmissions were installed in 82 of the coaches sold in the third quarter, representing 18.7 percent of the market. That is a decline from recent quarters.

Plachno concluded his third-quarter sales summary by noting there could be a new coach brand included in future reports. The first production order of Temsa 35-foot coaches arrived in Georgia from Turkey late in the third quarter. He expects the first Temsa sales to occur during the current quarter.

The Temsa was introduced to the North American motorcoach market at UMA Motorcoach Expo 2007 in New Orleans. (See Feb. 1, 2007 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

## Bendix to acquire SmarTire Systems

RICHMOND, British Columbia — Bendix has announced it is acquiring SmarTire Systems, the Canadian manufacturer of tire pressure monitoring systems.

Bendix said the deal should be completed during this quarter; it is subject to approval by both companies.

Bendix plans to incorporate SmarTire into its electronics busi-

ness unit.

“Bendix continues on its purposeful, aggressive drive for growth. Our goal remains to actively pursue business opportunities and effective technologies that help improve highway safety, enhance vehicle operation and help fleets manage and improve operating cost margins,” said Joe McAleese, Bendix president and CEO.

*Whatever road you travel...*

**RODES • ROPER • LOVE**  
helps get you there!

Great Prices & Great Service – WE SHOP FOR YOU!



**LIABILITY • PHYSICAL DAMAGE • PROPERTY  
WORKERS COMP. • LOSS CONTROL**

Charter • Limousine • Paratransit • Ambulance  
Taxi • Airport Shuttle • School • Trolley

**RODES • ROPER • LOVE INSURANCE AGENCY**  
a Division of Euclid Insurance Agenices, LLC

4450 W. Eau Gallie Blvd., Suite 164, Melbourne, FL 32934  
(800) 333-7754 • (321) 757-6181 • Fax (321) 757-6182  
[www.ropesroperlove.com](http://www.ropesroperlove.com)

The Transportation Insurance Specialists • Since 1896

**Take Control of Your Costs and Odors!**

**Ultra PowrPak XL**  
Better than ever. Controls odors all week long.

**New Formulation  
Increased Fragrance  
and Dye—Now with  
Effervesce**

*Deep blue non-staining dye  
and long-lasting fragrance!*



**chempace**  
corporation “the solution people”

339 Arco Drive • P.O. Box 3484 • Toledo, OH 43607  
419-535-0101 • Fax 419-535-0531 • [www.chempace.com](http://www.chempace.com)

**Call for Free Samples!**  
**1-800-423-5350**

SETRA - A BRAND OF DAIMLER

## The benchmark in luxury coaches



- Exciting, distinctive European design
- A uniquely luxurious travel environment
- Incredibly comfortable Setra premium seating
- State-of-the-art entertainment electronics
- Interiors customized to suit your business needs
- A state-of-the-art safety package
- Backed by Daimler

**Daimler Buses North America**  
6012-B High Point Road  
Greensboro, NC 27407  
800.882.8054  
sales@dcbusna.com  
[www.setra-coaches.com](http://www.setra-coaches.com)

**SETRA**

## MCI support

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The federal court handling the bankruptcy also has given MCI authority to pay pre-bankruptcy petition claims of "critical" vendors.

Additionally, MCI received approval of its \$311 million debtor-in-possession financing. General Electric Capital arranged the financing and is the largest lender for MCI's senior debtor-in-possession loans that will be used to refinance the company's existing first-lien debt and provide the liquidity needed for day-to-day operations.

Goldman Sachs Credit Partners arranged and is a lender, along with affiliates and funds managed by Monarch Alternative Capital, in what is called the junior debtor-in-possession loan facility.

Finally, MCI received approval to perform under a so-called lock-up agreement with Franklin Mutual Advisers, and certain of its affiliates, another critical aspect of the restructuring and refinancing plan.

In court documents, MCI defended its reorganization plan from objections filed by both the official Committee of Unsecured Creditors and Greyhound Lines,

which is a member of the unsecured creditors committee.

MCI said the committee had cherry picked provisions of the refinancing and restructuring agreements not to the committee liking and objected to what MCI was asking the court to approve based on the inclusion of those provisions.

MCI also said that creditor allegations that the terms negotiated by MCI were one-sided and designed to assure the unsecured creditors wouldn't be repaid were "simply wrong as a matter of law and fact."

MCI said it went to great lengths, under difficult circumstances, to achieve the best deal possible for itself and its creditors.

In another court filing, MCI said Greyhound was trying to "poison" the bankruptcy court against MCI, and said its one-time-largest customer had engaged in improper motives and tactics.

"Greyhound should not be permitted to derail the (MCI) reorganization efforts to gain a litigation advantage or as retribution for an unrelated, alleged contractual breach by one of (MCI's operating units)," MCI told the court.

## Tracer leak detection kit introduced

WESTBURY, N.Y. — Tracer Products has introduced a leak detection kit designed to make it easy for heavy-duty technicians to find air conditioning and fluid leaks the first time.

The TP-8697HD kit features a high-intensity leak detection flashlight that's 15-times brighter than standard LED lamps and has an inspection range of up to 20 feet. Powered by a rechargeable battery, the unit has a 50,000-hour service life.

Also included in the kit are a injector, two universal A/C dye cartridges with co-solvent free dye (each 1/2 oz cartridge can service up to 14 vehicles); an 8-ounce bottle of concentrated oil dye that services up to 16 vehicles, an 8-ounce bottle of coolant dye that services up to 8 vehicles, and fluorescence-enhancing glasses. Everything is stored in a carrying case.

More information, go to [www.tracerline.com](http://www.tracerline.com).

## Trucker in bus crash indicted

MADISON, Wis. — A truck driver found not guilty last year of negligent homicide in a deadly motorcoach crash three years ago now faces new charges in federal court.

Michael Kozlowski, 25, of Scherville, Ind., has been charged with falsifying his logbook in an indictment handed down by a federal grand jury here.

The indictment alleges Kozlowski falsely entered 10 hours of sleep in his truck on 12 separate occasions in August, September and October 2005. The charges were based on an investigation by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

If convicted, Kozlowski faces a maximum of 60 years in federal prison, five years on each count.

Kozlowski was found not guilty in April 2007, of

negligent homicide in the Oct. 2005, crash of a bus carrying the Chippewa Falls (Wis.) High School marching band. The coach crashed into Kozlowski's overturned semi on Interstate 94, near Osseo, Wis., killing five people, including the coach driver, and injuring 28 others.

Kozlowski had been accused of falling asleep at the wheel and causing the accident. But, Kozlowski's attorney claimed he was the victim of an overzealous prosecutor and the crash was the fault of the coach driver. The attorney maintained his client got enough sleep, even if his log didn't show it.

The National Transportation Safety Board blamed the tragedy on Kozlowski. (See Oct. 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

## Texas operators

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

show that about 200 companies lost their operating authority in the past 24 months, many of them may have been off the books for only a few days.

That's because the state database keeps tabs on the date each company's insurance is to expire and if an operator does not file the renewal information on time, the system automatically pulls its operating authority. However, if the paperwork is filed within a couple of days — which is often the case — then the carrier's authority is restored, although the revocation remains part of the total statistics.

Meantime, the Texas Department of Public Safety also is looking for rogue operators as part of its regular motorcoach safety inspection program, according to Capt. David Palmer.

Although he was unable to say how many coaches have been found to be operating without state authority, he said those that are identified are ordered off the road and out of service immediately.

"Our emphasis in the inspection program is on safety," he said, adding, though, that a check for federal and state operating authority is always part of each inspection.

The police agency, which works closely with state and federal transportation regulators, does about 23,000 terminal, roadside and destination inspections of motorcoaches and buses in the state annually.

Palmer said police also are paying close attention to buses that come across the border into Texas from Mexico, some of which have been involved in serious accidents in the state.

"We try to place added emphasis on motorcoaches and buses coming across the border because of the ac-

idents," he noted.

Palmer said the inspection of the Mexican motorcoaches is hampered by logistics and the design of the border stations.

Motorcoaches cross into the U.S. at the same border stations as automobiles, while commercial trucks — and there are many more of them than buses — cross at other locations.

The border stations where cars and buses are allowed to cross were not designed for bus inspections and there are almost no areas where an inspection can be conducted safely.

"It's kind of hit and miss because we can't always have someone at the bus crossings," said Palmer. "So, we can only do a limited number of inspections."

Palmer said some Mexican buses that are missed at the border crossings do get inspected when they are stopped as part of routine roadside inspections.

## Safety videos

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

"If a shareholder company (of IMG) does not have its own video, we encourage them to use the video we produced," said Tony Funderburg, national sales director for IMG.

Trailways President and CEO Gale Ellsworth said her organization produced a video and began disseminating it to its operator members in May.

"More than half have the video and have implemented the program," said Ellsworth. "I am very pleased to report that it has been well received by Trailways operators, our drivers and the passengers."

The FMCSA materials are available as free downloads from its website at [www.fmcsa.dot.gov/about/outreach/bus/bus.htm](http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/about/outreach/bus/bus.htm).

## How to contact us

To submit or report news, Letters to the Editor, articles, news releases or to report corrections:

E-mail: [bsankey@busandmotorcoachnews.com](mailto:bsankey@busandmotorcoachnews.com)  
 Fax: (405) 942-6201  
 Mail: 3108 NW 54th Street  
 Oklahoma City, OK 73112  
 Call: (866) 930-8421

To subscribe or inquire about your subscription:

E-mail: [ebalm@busandmotorcoachnews.com](mailto:ebalm@busandmotorcoachnews.com)  
 Fax: (405) 942-6201  
 Mail: 3108 NW 54th Street  
 Oklahoma City, OK 73112  
 Call: (866) 930-8421

To advertise or to mail advertising-related materials:

Call: Johnny Steger at (866) 930-8426  
 E-mail: [jsteger@busandmotorcoachnews.com](mailto:jsteger@busandmotorcoachnews.com)  
 Mail: 2200 N. Yarbrough, Suite B  
 Box No. 336  
 El Paso, TX 79925

To send advertisements or photographs via the Internet:

E-mail: [BMNews@jezac.com](mailto:BMNews@jezac.com)

To contact the United Motorcoach Association:

Call: (800) 424-8262  
 Online: [www.uma.org](http://www.uma.org)

# Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

ISSUE NO. 135

A PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED MOTORCOACH ASSOCIATION

## Staff

Editor & Publisher: Victor Parra

Senior Editor: Bruce Sankey

Sales Director: Johnny Steger

Industry Editor: Ken Presley

Associate Editor: Ellen Balm

Art Director: Mary E. McCarty

Editorial Assistant: Amy Stalknecht

Editorial Assistant: Mark Gedris

Accountant: Ted Williford

## Advisory Board

William Allen  
Sierra Trailways  
Sacramento, Calif.

Larry Benjamin  
Northfield Lines  
Northfield, Minn.

Dave Bolen  
New World Tours  
Bristow, Va.

David Brown  
Holiday Tours  
Randlemann, N.C.

James Brown Sr.  
Magic Carpet Tours  
Richmond, Va.

Steve Brown  
Brown Coach  
Amsterdam, N.Y.

Bob Foley  
ABC Companies  
Faribault, Minn.

Gladys Gillis  
Starline Transportation  
Seattle

Robert Hume  
Travel Mates Trailways  
Harrisonburg, Va.

Daryl G. Johnson  
J & J Charters  
Crosby, Texas

Dale Krapf  
Krapf Coaches  
West Chester, Pa.

Godfrey Lebron  
Paradise Trailways  
Hicksville, N.Y.

Joan Libby  
Cavalier Coach  
Boston, Mass.

Marcia Milton  
First Priority Trailways  
District Heights, Md.

Michael Neustadt  
Coach Tours  
Brookfield, Conn.

Jeff Polzien  
Red Carpet Tours  
Oklahoma City

Tom Ready  
Ready Bus Lines  
LaCrescent, Minn.

Brian Scott  
Escot Bus Lines  
Largo, Fla.

Michelle Silvestro  
National Interstate Insurance Co.  
Richfield, Ohio

T. Ralph Young  
Young Transportation  
Ashville, N.C.

# MCI files objection with UMA over bankruptcy article

Motor Coach Industries has filed a complaint with the United Motorcoach Association about a Page One story in the Nov. 1 issue, reporting on the bankruptcy of MCI, and its dispute with Greyhound Lines and other creditors.

MCI told the association it expects an apology for "the negative impact of the misleading and inflammatory language and speculative opinion of the author instead of the complete use of facts."

Here is what MCI told the association:

"The article should have been categorized as an editorial with a byline. If the UMA intends to include future compositions expressing personal views on a situation, they should commit to the use of an editorial section with Mr. (Bruce) Sankey's name and title.

"Compounding the problem was the way the article was written. It was difficult or impossible for the reader to tell when the au-

thor was purportedly reporting what a source was saying vs. the author's opinion. A few of the many examples that can be cited: the highly inappropriate "dirty pool" comment; the defamatory "defective G-model coaches" statement; the "ultimately [sic] indignity" comment. (There was a grammar error missed in proof-reading).

"The Nov. 1 article erroneously suggests that MCI's not listing Greyhound in MCI's list of the 30 largest unsecured creditors was somehow improper, which is clearly not the case. Simply because Greyhound claimed in a subsequent pleading to be owed millions of dollars by MCI does not make it so.

"Even a cursory review of MCI's court filings, in either the bankruptcy case or the Cook County litigation to which the author referred, would have revealed the fact that MCI vigorously contests

Greyhound's claims, has done so for nearly three years, and will continue to do so.

"The author's failure or refusal to present a balanced picture of the parties' disputes by citing to or quoting from MCI's pleadings was exacerbated by the repeated statements that MCI "had no comment," which was and is clearly not the case.

"The fundamental unfairness of the article is demonstrated by the author's apparent approach in obtaining source material. He had no difficulty finding and amply quoting from the pleadings and other filings of the Official Committee of Unsecured and Greyhound. Yet, despite MCI's filings being equally available to him, he failed to include any quotes or position statements from MCI's pleadings that were directly relevant to the issues raised by the other parties.

"As noted above, the author

compounded the article's inaccuracy and unbalanced presentation by then falsely telling readers that MCI "had no comment." If the other parties' pleadings sufficed as source material for the author to describe their positions, why not MCI's?

"MCI has been open and transparent in all its communications to its customers, vendors and employees as well as the trade publications. The day this article was released, MCI management was in Delaware in court proceedings awaiting final approval of the filing decision and was unavailable for comment.

"In September, following the original Chapter 11 filing, MCI provided Bruce Sankey with a personal interview with Tom Sorrells, MCI president and CEO, to ensure all questions were answered factually and completely. MCI deserved the opportunity to respond on a topic so important to its communi-

cation efforts rather than to have an article released with misleading and incomplete information.

"Even if MCI did not specifically comment, fundamental fairness required the article to refer to or describe MCI's positions as set forth in the pleadings, especially since the pleadings of the other parties likely served as the author's primary, if not exclusive, source of information as to their positions.

"In short, UMA owes MCI an apology for the article, and we expect that it will be forthcoming immediately."

**Editor's Note:** UMA regrets MCI's unhappiness with the article and apologizes for any errors and language that offends. At the same time, it respectfully disagrees with some MCI statements and asserts that this issue could have been avoided if MCI had responded to a request from *Bus & Motorcoach News* for comments on the specific issues addressed in the article.



## C.E. Niehoff & Co.

### BRUSHLESS ALTERNATORS

## DESIGNING FOR TOMORROW'S DEMANDS

## Reliable High-Output Power Designed for Coach & Transit

C.E. Niehoff & Co. is a custom alternator manufacturer dedicated to meeting the specific needs of our OEM & Aftermarket customers.

### Features

- Air Cooled, no more oil leaks
- High Efficiency
- Long Life Bearings
- Overvoltage Protection
- Stationary Field and Stator Winding

### Warranty

OEM - 2 yr, **3 yr(C703)** / Unlimited Mileage  
Aftermarket - 1 yr, **2 yr(C703)** / Unlimited Mileage

### For More Information

Phone: (847) 866 - 1500

Fax: (847) 492 - 1242

E-Mail: sales@CENiehoff.com

2021 Lee Street, Evanston IL, 60202 USA

www.CENiehoff.com



C703  
28V / 330A



C803  
28V / 500A

Both models equipped for existing saddle mount brackets.

## State transportation officials want charter rule weakened

HARTFORD, Conn. — Top state transportation officials from throughout the U.S. are calling for major reforms of the nation's transportation programs, including a recommendation that the six-month-old federal charter bus rule be revamped "to allow greater flexibility for public transportation activities/events."

In other words, the state officials want the rule amended to preclude non-taxpayer funded bus and motorcoach companies from serving their communities and allow public transit agencies to use tax money to subsidize service to golf tournaments and other specialty events.

Meeting here last month, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials approved a slate of recommendations for next year's congressional reauthorization of federal highway and transit programs.

AASHTO's transportation agenda covers 10 broad areas related to federal transportation policy, programs and funding, including a specific focus on public transit. It recommends a big in-

crease in federal funding for public transit, plus a revamping of the federal charter bus rule that went into effect at the end of April.

The negotiated rule clarifies the role of public transit in providing charter service, stopping transit agencies from providing charter service that is operated unfairly in competition with private bus companies.

AASHTO says that while the new charter bus rule allows "some flexibility in trips that transit agencies have been providing, the new rule also limits participation in transportation activities/events."

"This has caused significant issues in local communities that have provided funding support for public transportation. Public transportation systems may no longer provide event services if a private carrier can demonstrate they are willing and able to provide the service. As such, the (AASHTO) legislative team is recommending that the rule be amended to provide greater flexibility for public agencies."

In other words, let transits back in the charter business.

## RavensRide

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

are doing.

"Carriers need to band together and work together to make it happen. I know that they're your competitors but you need to band together and make it work. All of the carriers, if we don't work together, then the (Maryland Transit Administration) is going to get it back and we don't want that to happen.

"Organizations just have to trust that their people are going to do it," said Parr.

### Bumps in the road

Auto parking is limited near the Ravens' stadium, which is in an urban setting, notes Roy Sommerhof of the NFL club. So, the motorcoach shuttles are badly needed to operate what is called RavensRide. There also is a light-rail trolley that stops at the stadium. "We need that combination to make it work."

Transitioning to the shuttle bus system operated by the private companies encountered more than a few bumps in the road. For example, the operators have had to overcome higher insurance requirements and premiums; bad

press; a late start, and the cost of using public park-and-ride lots.

But the Ravens and the operators have high hopes that much of the worst is behind them and next season will bring better numbers. There were two pre-season games this year and there are eight regular home games.

"We have a good relationship with the consortium of carriers and that's gone very well. We wish the numbers would be a little more but with time that may change," says Sommerhof.

"One thing that will help is because we got a late start, we would like to market to the season (ticket) holders better in the future. That might drive the numbers a little bit," says Sommerhof, who is vice president of stadium operations for the Ravens.

The team initiated contact with Baltimore-area private bus operators in July, mere weeks before the first preseason game in mid-August, according to Cathy Shea, vice president of operations at Golden Ring Travel & Transportation Inc.

"We haven't been pulling in the numbers that the (transit authority) pulled in the past. But I think that was the negative press. There were

reasons for the change in price," added Parr.

### Surprises, too

"We weren't expecting to pay for a parking lot." And higher fuel costs — until very recently — also were a factor driving up prices. "The (transit authority) wants their share; they weren't happy about this," Parr noted.

More than 500 fans ride the buses each game, less than half the number that used the transit authority service last year. The seven coach companies share the organizational load, with three carriers handling advance dispatch, Shea explained.

"The FTA ruling caught a lot of us in this industry by surprise. ... We want to try and make this thing work; the key is to make it a reasonable price. The riders seem to feel it's a reasonable price," Sommerhof said.

Ridership is key to the success of the project, says Sommerhof. "(Operators) have to be smart with regard to pricing for it to work."

On the private operators ability to boost ridership: "I think it just depends on how the Ravens play, to tell the truth. ... I think a lot of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12 ►

The advertisement displays several bus seat models arranged on a light-colored, textured background. Each seat is accompanied by a label in a stylized font:

- 2+1**: A light blue seat with a footrest.
- BRASIL**: A blue seat with a textured fabric.
- TORINO STANDARD**: A blue seat with a textured fabric.
- TORINO VIP**: A blue seat with a textured fabric and a headrest.
- PATRIOT**: A light blue seat with a patterned fabric.
- FEATURES**: A blue seat with a textured fabric, shown with a tray table extended.

At the bottom of the advertisement, the text reads: **THE BEST OPTION FOR YOU.**

**AMAYA SEATING** logo is on the left, with "ISO 9001 2000 CERTIFIED" below it.

**Fulton 6, Fraccionamiento Industrial San Nicolás**  
 Tlalneptantla Edo. de México, MÉXICO, 54030  
 Tel: (52.55) 53.10.10.46 • 53.11.50.00 Fax: 53.17.41.11  
 Email: donovan@asientosamaya.com.mx

**North American distributors:**  
 George Farrell Tel: 214-495-9975 Fax: 214-495-9978 Email: gfarr007@aol.com  
 Darrell Niswander Tel: 419-892-2377 Fax: 419-892-2655 Email: darnis1@aol.com

# Changing the industry's perception about seatbelts

By *Dave Millhouser*

Duane was a large, powerful man. When the ancient coach he was driving entered a turn too fast (sans power steering), he yanked the wheel around. The force snapped the driver's seat pedestal and Duane rolled into the stepwell. He scrambled back to the wheel and, standing like a ship's helmsman, completed the turn.

This was one of those occasions when a seatbelt might have done more harm than good, had the seat remained strapped to Duane's derriere.

We're at a point where motorcoach safety is being scrutinized in new, and potentially awkward, ways. While every responsible operator welcomes real improvements, many are wary of politically motivated, simplistic fixes to complex problems.

Our industry sometimes is perceived as being against mandated seatbelts, when what we really want are measures that are demonstrated to be effective.

An engineer once told me he could guarantee the safety of every passenger in a bus accident, but only if he was informed, in advance, what kind of accident it would be. Effective protection for one type accident might kill in another.

Years ago a beverage truck knocked a loaded school bus into a lake and several students drowned. In that particular case seat-

belts probably would have made things worse.

In New Brunswick, Canada, a coach missed an exit and overturned. Several passengers were thrown through the windows and killed. Seatbelts, almost certainly, would have helped. Ironically, in this case, each of the passengers killed HAD a seatbelt but wasn't using it.

Recently, lots of technical innovation has been introduced to prevent accidents but there will always be mishaps. Traditionally, in our industry, survival in a crash largely depended on passengers remaining contained in a rugged cabin. Most fatalities occurred when victims were thrown from the vehicle.

That approach worked admirably for many years but then one thing changed the equation. Windows got big — real big, creating large spaces through which bodies could fly. In addition, the larger sashes are harder to keep latched (not to mention heavier to open in an emergency).

Engineers don't invent things; they find ways to make technology practical. It would be nice if safety was our only concern, but in real life it can't be. Otherwise 45-foot coaches would have no windows and seat 17 people in fireproof Styrofoam cocoons.

The goal is a bus that is as safe as possible but nice enough to not drive the public back into cars, whose accident rate dwarfs that of buses. Engineers are asked to hit a

moving target as markets, technology and politics evolve.

Politicians (and lawyers with 20/20 hindsight) seek simple solutions. The problem is that those may not be the BEST solutions.

Seatbelts may be part of the answer. They're mandated in Europe, and one large U.S. carrier that uses them was pleasantly surprised to find 60 percent of the passengers on its double-deck buses were strapping in.

In a long-awaited crash test, preliminary data seemed to indicate that current seat mounting systems might be adequate for belted seats. If so, fears that coaches would have to be substantially redesigned appear to be unfounded.

If seat belts are part of the solution, should they be two or three point? How do you handle passengers who, by not buckling up, may become missiles in an accident? In some cases, belts cause injuries; who's responsible in that case?

Europeans bond side windows into the coach. That approach should be studied because it has the virtue of being simple to build, while strengthening the bus body.

Manufacturers have been forced to take a wait-and-see approach to some technology. If they move one way, and regulators move another, they're toast. Once practical standards are in place, they will respond with enthusiasm and creativity.

Several major builders offer a number of

innovative safety options in Europe but not here. The litigious climate in the U.S. makes it too risky. They're damned if they do, damned if they don't.

Part of any new regulation must be protection for manufacturers that comply. A builder, whose vehicle meets standards, shouldn't be sued when an unforeseeable accident occurs.

A coach was passing a blasting zone on the thruway when an 80-pound rock was flung 100 feet into the air. It dropped vertically through a bus roof, almost into the lap of a passenger. Should every coach be equipped with an armored roof (and what would that do to stability)?

What needs to happen is for responsible politicians and regulators to think things through, perform more real-world testing, check out what the rest of the world is doing, and then promulgate realistic standards.

We, as an industry, need to be visibly proactive in this process, and change the perception we resist change. Proclaiming we're the safest way to travel rings hollow in the aftermath of a tragedy.

*Dave Millhouser is a bus industry marketing consultant and freelance writer. Contact him at: dave\_millhouser@hotmail.com.*



*Dave Millhouser*



**Alternative Fuels**

**Hybrid Conversion**

**Wheelchair Lifts**

**Repowers**

**Fire & Accident Repair**

**Overhauls**

**Renovations**

**Conversion**

**Remanufacturing**

**Multiplexing**



REPAIRS  
RETROFITS  
REHAB

1-800-300-3751

*Over 20 years of Quality Workmanship & Customer Satisfaction*



**Wheel Chair Lifts**



**Accident Repair**



**Complete Structural Remanufacturing**



**Hybrid Retrofits**



**Interior/Exterior Renovation**



**Alternative Fuel Conversions**

Complete Coach Works - 1863 Service Ct., Riverside, CA. 92507

www.completecoach.com email: sales@completecoach.com



## RavensRide

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

business is driven by the way the team performs," said Parr. The Ravens are 5-3 at midseason.

Shea says they charge \$20 per person from Baltimore and \$25 from the Manchester area to the stadium — double the amount the tax-subsidized local transit authority was charging. Discounts were offered for early purchasers of ride tickets.

### Upfront costs

The operators had to pay \$20,700 up front in usage and deposits to the Maryland Transportation Authority and Maryland State Highway Administration.

Since the coach operators began their service, the Ravens have worked out a coach parking arrangement at M&T Bank Stadium with the city of Baltimore and the Baltimore Parking Authority for RavensRide coaches to park free, avoiding the \$140 parking fees usually paid by charter coaches, said Shea. "There have been a lot of entities coming together to make this happen," she added.

The coach operators have doubled their liability insurance from

\$5 million to \$10 million so they can use the stadium, Shea said.

"Excellent service was a factor understood as being in everyone's best interest — more than price, as both the Ravens and RavensRide carriers understood that the days of \$10 bus service, which was taxpayer supplemented, was now over per the FTA charter service rule. The goal was great service and fair prices," said Shea.

"The feedback — from the fans, carriers, drivers and Ravens operation — has been excellent. Aside from the grumbling over the initial price shock and negative media coverage concerning price increases, all has run quite smoothly.

"Ridership is slowly increasing as word spreads that we are providing good value and improved service," Shea noted.

One reason Shea sees a future in RavensRide is that fans are realizing they can avoid the price of fuel and tolls and not deal with the traffic. And "most fans say they would not go back to plastic (transit bus) seats again even if they had the choice."

### Spreading the word

The NFL team is directly mar-

keting the shuttle service through e-mail. "To remind (fans) that this is a viable option," says Sommerhof. The ball club is adding signage on its concourses.

Also, operators have the chance to advertise on radio, and there is a plan to include inserts going to season-ticket holders when they receive their tickets next July. It hasn't been settled yet who will pay for the inserts.

Parr would like to see testimonials used next season as a marketing tool: "But we do appreciate the business we have gotten."

### Hands-on marketing

Probably the most effective — and cheapest — way to market to fans has been to have company staffers go out on Sundays to explain the service and share with fans why the prices are higher. Parr and Shea go to parking lots to tell fans about the costs of diesel fuel, insurance and park-and-ride rentals. "It's just a really complicated story of money and effort and time," says Parr.

"People are just appreciative that we are providing the service. All (the media) focused on was double the price, double the price. We park next to the stadium, it's a

fast ride there and a fast ride back. How can it be better than that?" asks Parr.

### And the future?

Asked whether the Ravens will continue to use the seven operators, Sommerhof responds: "It just has to work for the fans. If it continues to work for the fans, then we'll do it."

Sommerhof and the operators say that initially he wanted to deal with only one company. But after the request for proposals went out, a group of operators came together and offered the service. "We were fine with that as long as we have one point of contact," Shea serves as the contact.

"The Ravens have been appreciative that our companies have been working together so far," says Parr.

"This has improved relations between the companies. We usually do business on the phone but this has allowed us to meet face to face. It has brought us closer together," says Parr.

Shea says the project has opened the door for the coach companies to work together on other projects. "The carriers involved have already ventured into new

revenue-generating sources by working together as a team, providing drivers and staff to take on the big jobs that none of us alone could handle. We foresee many, many more opportunities in the future when we work together as a team. A win-win for all."

Ken Presley, vice president of industry relations at the United Motorcoach Association, sees the initiative by the Baltimore operators as encouraging.

"In many ways, the success of the privatization of RavensRide is not a victory over the transit system but rather a triumph for private operators going outside their comfort zone and saying, 'we can do this.'

"Per-capita service is different but it can also be rewarding," says Presley.

"The operators, along with Maryland Motorcoach Association President Sam Shea and Sackett-Cook Insurance Agency, are to be commended for taking on all the challenges and making the shuttle a success."

Presley thinks the success in Baltimore could be a model for other areas and open up opportunities as a result of the FTA rule change

# NIMCO/Bus Division

973 589-9265 • Toll Free 800-526-8055  
FAX 973-589-2253 • P.O. BOX 5157 • NEWARK, NJ 07105  
www.nimcobus.com

*Supplying the Transportation Industry with  
Used, Serviceable & Rebuildable Bus Parts  
for Over 25 Years!*

VOLUME DISCOUNTS • PRIDE IN PERFORMANCE

**DEEP DISCOUNTS!**  
on all Detroit Diesel & Allison  
Transmissions

**SAVE MONEY ~ SAVE TIME**

We sell good running qualified bus components.

**NO RISK PURCHASE PLAN**

We unconditionally guarantee our customers satisfaction.

**WE ALSO STOCK**

- Front and Rear Axle Parts • Engine Accessories
- Alternators and other Electrical Components
- Air Conditioning Components • Body Parts

*We Buy & Sell Buses... Call for a Quote*

**RBS, Inc.**  
Relational Bus Systems

**GoChart 2000<sub>v20</sub>**  
The Next Level in Charter Management



**GoMile 3000**  
IFTA Compatible Fuel Tax Reporting

**Off-Site Backup**  
Secure Backup and Disaster Recovery

**DriverDuty 3000**  
Driver Payroll Module

**GoTour Online**  
Browser Based Tour Management System

INDUSTRY PARTNERS



FOR A FREE EVALUATION COPY CALL 800-448-7001  
OR GO ONLINE TO WWW.RBS2000.COM

# Nat'I Interstate posts loss; cites tough environment

RICHFIELD, Ohio — The year 2008 won't end soon enough for National Interstate Corporation, parent company of National Interstate Insurance Co.

That's because the motorcoach industry's second-largest auto liability insurer has suffered significant investment losses as a result of the Wall Street meltdown and has incurred unusually large losses as a result of crashes occurring at charter bus companies it insures.

The investment losses National Interstate realized during the third quarter spread red ink to its bottom line. The company reported a net loss of \$4.2 million, or 22 cents a share, for the three months end Sept. 30, compared to profits of \$10.1 million, or 52 cents per diluted share, during the same period last year.

Although National Interstate had net income from operations of \$4.4 million during this year's third quarter, that was overshadowed by net realized losses from investments of \$8.6 million, or 45 cents a share.

For the first nine months of this year, National Interstate earned \$9.7 million, or 50 cents per diluted share, compared to profits of \$32.5 million, or \$1.67 per share diluted, for the same nine months in 2007.

National Interstate realized no tax savings from its third-quarter investment losses because, said the company, a tax benefit could not be recognized in the current year. "If the company generates investment gains in future periods it may be able to recognize the tax benefit from the 2008 realized investment losses," National Interstate noted.

In September, National Interstate announced it would sustain investment losses "caused by the global financial crisis." Its losses stem largely from company investments in financial institutions, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and Lehman Brothers. (See Oct. 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

The third-quarter investment losses apparently will not be National Interstate's last. In its third-quarter report, the company said it has an additional \$27 million in unrealized losses from a variety of securities and other financial investments.

"The adverse impact from investments on our overall results is reflective of the unprecedented investment environment we are experiencing," said National Interstate President and CEO Dave Michelson. "We continue to monitor our investments closely with an emphasis on maintaining a high quality portfolio."

National Interstate's difficulties were not confined to the financial markets. Lower underwriting profits contributed to a decline in net income from operations.

During the first half of '08,

National Interstate experienced "unusually high loss severity" that continued in the third quarter. Its most significant losses were in the charter bus sector.

"While the losses have occurred with both large and small charter companies, we have focused our attention on the small fleet operators, which represent a relatively small portion of our public transportation

premium, and has historically performed well," said Michelson.

"We are in the process of reviewing our entire in-force small fleet book of charter transportation business to ensure that our high underwriting standards remain in place," said Michelson. "Other initiatives centered on risk selection and pricing adequacy have been implemented relative to the entire charter trans-

portation product."

Summing up, Michelson said that "so far, 2008 has been extremely challenging. The turmoil in the investment markets has hurt our bottom line, but we believe our overall quality bias for investments will get us through the crisis.

"We are confident we will return to our historical performance levels," Michelson asserted.

The market value of National Interstate's cash and invested assets was \$544.1 million as of Sept. 30, consisting of 91.2 percent cash and investment-grade, fixed-income investments.

National Interstate's board approved a six-cents-per-share dividend, payable Dec. 12, to stockholders of record Nov. 28. The dividend rate was unchanged.



## Wilson Cellular Amplifiers – Increased Safety for Drivers, Added Convenience for Passengers

With an amplifier system from Wilson Electronics, you can maintain a reliable cellular signal on the open road.

Wilson amplifiers and antennas keep you connected. They provide an extra measure of safety during breakdowns or other emergencies, and passengers appreciate the ability to make calls and use laptop data cards in places they normally couldn't.

With the highest receiver sensitivity in the industry, and microprocessor-controlled power output, Wilson amplifiers ensure the best possible cellular performance on the go.

To learn how Wilson products can enhance your motorcoach fleet, contact a sales representative or log on to our website today.

 **Wilson**  
Electronics, Inc.

1-866-208-3898

[www.wilsonelectronics.com/bus](http://www.wilsonelectronics.com/bus)



## FTA rulings

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Clemson Area Transit.

After entering into the contract in mid-August, the YMCA backed out a week later and told Jean's it was going to use Clemson Area Transit. Jean's estimates it lost more than \$13,000.

The transit authority denied having a contract with Foothills, and claimed that people could board the buses even if they weren't at the parking lot.

Shuttles from the remote parking lot were being operated for football fans going to and from

Clemson University stadium. The transit authority told the FTA it did not have any contact with the YMCA and was providing the service under a "subscription agreement" with Clemson University.

Labeling the agreement "subscription service" was a way to try to get around the charter rule; it meant the university paid a bulk sum in exchange for shuttle service, although that is not the FTA's definition of subscription service.

The FTA's take was that subscription service can be an extension of a regular route, but regular fares must be charged and anyone should be able to board. This was

not the case for the YMCA shuttle. While the transit authority denied having a contract with Foothills, there was clear evidence that there was shuttle service from the YMCA parking lot.

Jean's Bus Service provided a photo that clearly showed a Clemson Area Transit bus with a message board reading "YMCA Shuttle."

The FTA ruled that the transit authority's definition of "subscription service" appeared to be just another name for charter service. The FTA wrote: "It is also clear that Jean's Bus Service suffered an economic loss as a result of this service."

In Louisville, John Miller, president of Miller Transportation, told the FTA he stood to lose approximately \$500,000 in business because of a \$445,000 contract between the University of Louisville and the Transit Authority of River City.

In the Louisville situation, the university established the routes and schedule. The service was not interconnected with the larger transit authority route system.

Said the FTA in its ruling: "It is charter service because the shuttle is provided at the request of a third party for the exclusive use of a bus or van at a negotiated price." The ruling said it was "appropriate to

issue a cease-and-desist order in this case.

"Miller demonstrated by a preponderance of the evidence that it is more likely than not that TARC is providing unauthorized charter service to the U of L campus," the FTA said.

"In both of these instances the private operator used a new tool available under the revised charter service rule," says Ken Presley, UMA vice president of industry relations.

"The rule provides for the FTA to issue an 'advisory opinion/cease and desist order' which is less formal than an actual complaint and is intended to be a little quicker. We are proud of these operators for demonstrating courage and taking the initiative to halt the intrusion of transits into charter service. Every favorable decision is a win for our industry," said Presley.

## School operators to meet at Expo

ORLANDO, Fla. — The annual Midwinter Meeting of the National School Transportation Association will be Jan. 24-28, coinciding with UMA Motorcoach Expo 2009, which runs Jan. 21-25. Both meetings are in Orlando.

UMA and NSTA are offering a package arrangement to individuals who want to attend both shows and participate in all events and activities.

Those signing up for just the NSTA meeting will be able to take in the UMA Motorcoach Expo trade-show floor on Saturday, Jan. 24.

The NSTA Midwinter Meeting provides attendees with an opportunity to network with industry professionals and keep up to date about developments within the school bus industry and the association.

On Sunday, Jan. 25, delegates can participate in the annual NSTA golf tournament, with a reception for all attendees and guests that evening.

The other days will feature sessions on legislative and regulatory issues, as well as other association business.

The schedule is arranged to be family friendly so attendees can both work and enjoy Orlando, said Dale Krapf of Krapf Bus Companies.

"I am looking forward to attending UMA's education sessions and NSTA's general sessions to learn how current topics are affecting both sides of the bus industry," Krapf added.

Members can attend both events for \$475 per person and non-members can attend both for \$575 per person. The deadline for the package deal is Jan. 1.

For more information or to register, call NSTA at (800) 222-6782.

## CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

## 2002 &amp; 2003 MCI J Model Coaches



Indian Trails, Inc. has the following equipment available for immediate delivery:

Unit	Year	Mileage	Unit	Year	Mileage
314	2002	352,000	317	2003	280,000
315	2002	313,000	318	2003	282,000
316	2003	274,000	319	2003	273,000

Coaches are either 48 or 56 passenger configuration.

Prices include all spare stock of seats. Equipped with beverage galley, cordless and corded microphone, DVD, CD and VCR with four monitors, Enclosed parcel racks.

**2002 models – \$230,000 w/tires**  
**2003 models – \$260,000 w/tires**

Series 60w/Jake and Allison B-500. All coaches purchased new, complete maintenance histories.

Contact Ken Henry, Bob Erickson or Chad Cushman  
**1-800-292-3831**

## 2000 &amp; 2001 MCI E4500s FOR SALE

These are 1 owner, extremely low mile, well cared for high end coaches. You will not find any nicer! DD series 60, Allison B500R, 58 American seats, lavatory, Michelins with Alcoa rims, CD changers, DVD players, cordless mikes. 2001 model has factory wheelchair lift with 8 tie down stations. *Partial financing available to qualified buyer.* 2000: \$169,000/firm 2001: \$215,000/offer



**Marc 808.832.6261 for photos and more info**  
 ~ Will deliver to West Coast ~



**1999 MCI 102EL3**  
 New transmission  
 \$140,000 or make an offer  
**2001 MCI 102EL#**  
 \$175,000 or make offer

54 pass, B500 transmission, CAT engine, fully equipped, cruise control, aluminum wheels, 6 monitor VCR & CD player

Call for a spec sheet 1-800-288-8246



**2003 MCI E4500**  
**Excellent Condition**  
**LOW Mileage**  
**\$265,000**

DD Series 60, 400 hp, Allison B500, Jake Brake, 56 pass, AM/FM, CASS/8 Disc CD Changer/VCR/DVD/PA., Six Monitors, Enhanced Speaker System, Cruise Control, Enclosed Overhead Racks, Polished Alcoa Aluminum Wheels & Tires, Lavatory Holding Tank, National Seating with Foot Rests, Isringhausen Driver Seat, Dual Bosch Alternators, Window Shades, Card Table, Snack Trays, 181,000 miles

Call David 1-888-382-8737 ext. 200  
 david@davidthomastours.com  
 for more pictures go to: [www.busesforsale.us](http://www.busesforsale.us)

**1994 MCI 102D3 Coach 382,000 Miles ~ \$59,999**

Here is a nice RUST FREE – WEST COAST 40 foot coach. Detroit Series 60 w/Jake, Allison ATEC 700 Series Trans, New Exterior Paint, Recent New Interior, 47 Pass National Seats, Cold R-22 A/C, Cruise Control, Baggage Door Air Locks, Enclosed Parcel Racks, Drivers Window Shades, Extra Capacity Fuel Tank, Serviceable Tires (no recaps), All Brakes & Bushings etc. in Good Condition. *This is a very nice driving coach, fully serviced & ready to work.*

Call JD at 612-490-3185 or Darcy at 800-322-8687  
 We have other coaches available, call for details

## FOR SALE

(2) 2003 MCI — J-4500 — 500K MILES  
 (1) 2003 Van Hool — T2145 — 500K MILES  
**\$250,000 EACH ~ WILL DELIVER**  
**CALL CARLOS @ 310-326-6198**

**REPOS FOR SALE**  
 Variety of makes and models of  
 "Bank Repos" across the United States and Priced to Sell!

**1-877-737-2221 Ext. 716 for more information!**

# IC Bus raises prices on buses

WARRENVILLE, Ill. — IC Bus, the leading producer of school buses and also commercial buses, increased its prices on Nov. 1.

Citing rising commodity prices, including steel, aluminum and copper, IC Bus said it was forced to increase the price of its new buses an estimated 2.5 to 3.5 percent.

“Market conditions and global expansion continue to be the driving force behind these high (commodity) prices,” said John McKinney, IC Bus vice president and general manager.

“We have optimized our manufacturing efficiencies and absorbed as much of the in-

creases as possible to keep costs in line for our customers. Unfortunately, an increase is unavoidable due to factors such as record-high commodity prices that are beyond our control,” said McKinney.

Steel and its derivatives account for over 50 percent of the material value of many of IC’s models. Steel prices have increased 150 percent since January. Palladium and copper products, which make up almost 10 percent of a bus’ material value, have jumped 70 percent in price since 2005.

The price of platinum, which is used in 2007 emissions after-treatment devices, has increased about 40 percent in recent months.

# megabus expands to four new cities

CHICAGO — megabus.com is adding four new cities to its route system next month.

The intercity curbside service announced it is now booking trips to and from Albany, Rochester and Syracuse, N.Y., plus Niagara Falls, Ontario, with direct routes from New York City.

The new service begins Dec. 4.

The additions bring the number of locations served by megabus.com’s New York hub to 11 cities in the U.S. and Canada.

Dale Moser, president and chief operating officer of megabus.com, said: “We are de-

lighted to be expanding our service to these new cities. In the current tough economic climate, budget products like megabus.com are exactly what consumers are looking for to make their dollar go further.

“We believe this is a market with huge growth potential as growing numbers of people ditch their cars for high-quality, low-cost coach travel to beat the credit crunch, rising fuel prices and higher household bills.”

megabus.com says it is attracting 150,000 passengers monthly to its service that now covers 13 states and one Canadian province.

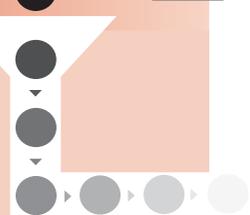
**Dump  
CLEAN...  
Dump  
LEGAL!**



**WASHROOM WASTE DISPOSAL UNIT**  
Installs directly into your existing sewer system!

**L**avatory dump hopper is assembled and ready to install in your existing sewer system. Its cover plate is easily rolled back with the remover tool. Each of your service lanes can easily be equipped with this time-saving unit, which has been the industry standard for over thirty years. All major credit cards accepted.

Call 1-866-LAV-DUMP or email [lavdump@yahoo.com](mailto:lavdump@yahoo.com) for additional information.



▲ Washroom waste is removed quickly, easily and safely

## HUDSON RIVER CORPORATION

Call toll free: 1-866-LAV-DUMP | Fax: 1-201-420-3322

REDUCE  
REUSE  
RECYCLE

We’ve always been green.  
We sell pre-owned coaches.



TOLL FREE (877)-MICHAUD (877-642-4283)  
[www.BusesOnline.com](http://www.BusesOnline.com)

**SEFAC**  
Mobile Column Lifts

800.826.3486  
[www.sefac.com](http://www.sefac.com)

# COMING SOON

# in 2009



**AT PREVOST, EXCEEDING YOUR EXPECTATIONS IS A PASSION** whether it is finding new, smarter solutions or putting the finishing touches on our unique designs, **we stand apart.**

SEE FOR YOURSELF OUR NEW 2009 INTRODUCTIONS

AND VISIT THE PREVOST BOOTH AT:

- ABA in Charlotte on Jan. 7-12 2009
- UMA in Orlando on Jan. 21-25 2009

**Welcome aboard.**

FOR SALES INFORMATION ON PREVOST MODELS AND VOLVO 9700:

USA 1 877 773.8678 CANADA 418 883.3391

Volvo 9700 motorcoaches are distributed by PrevoSt, a fully owned subsidiary of Volvo Bus Corporation. Please contact your PrevoSt Regional Sales Manager for more information.

## PREVOST®

The ultimate class.