

MOTORCOACH EXPO 2007



The Sunliner Coach from Stallion Bus Industries has a Cummins engine, Allison transmission and Thermo King A/C.

Chinese buses to be unveiled at Expo

Variety of models to be offered for U.S. coach market

NEW ORLEANS — When attendees at Motorcoach Expo 2007 walk onto the show floor next month, they'll find vehicles that have never before been seen at an Expo and vehicles they've probably never encountered — buses and motorcoaches made in China.

Two new companies that plan to import Chinese buses and sell them in the U.S. will have their Americanized Chinese-built buses for eyeing, driving and tire kicking.

During the past decade, as the U.S. appetite for all things Chinese has expanded, imports of Chinese-made clothing, DVDs, furniture, microwaves, shoes, toys and tens of thousands of other products have mushroomed from \$50 billion annually to an expected \$275 billion this year.

Now, we're about to find out if



The Express Bus from Stallion is a Chinese-built shuttle.

buses made in China can find a market in the U.S.

In fact, a slew of Chinese buses are headed for North America, ranging from 45- and 40-foot motorcoaches, to 35-foot coach-like buses, to 25-30 passenger shuttles, to low-floor transits.

At least three different companies are planning to distribute Chinese-made or -designed buses, with two of the import groups

headed by individuals with extensive experience in the U.S. bus industry. These two companies are the ones that will be exhibiting at Motorcoach Expo.

The third company is a U.S. manufacturer of recreational vehicles that is diversifying into the seated-bus market. It is not making the trip to New Orleans, however.

Obviously, the three companies

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30 ▶

Talks on charter rules end with no agreement; FTA will propose rules

WASHINGTON — A spirited, eight-month effort by the motorcoach and public transit industries to rewrite the 20-year-old federal charter service regulations has ended as expected — in a stalemate.

Representatives of the two often-feuding industries wrapped up a series of monthly two-day "negotiated rulemaking sessions" this month without settling a number of key differences that federal regulators who brought them together had hoped would be decided.

Now, the issues that have long split the private and public carriers over the type of charter work that public transit agencies should be allowed to do will be settled by attorneys at the Federal Transit

Administration.

FTA lawyers began rewriting the rules immediately and could have them ready for the lengthy adoption process as early as next month, said the FTA's chief counsel, David Horner, who will direct the drafting process.

He said the new rules could be in place in anywhere from 3 months to 14 months, depending on the length of several required administrative steps and the amount of public comment the proposed rules generate after they are published.

Under the rulemaking process, provisions that were endorsed by both sides during the negotiation sessions will be written into the

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Investment group purchasing industry giant Coach America

NEW YORK — Three years after it was formed, Coach America is being sold by one New York investment firm to another New York investment group.

Fenway Partners of New York City, which describes itself as a "leading middle market private equity firm," announced it will acquire Coach America from Kohlberg & Co. of Mt Kisco, N.Y.

Coach America is the largest tour and charter bus operator in North America and the second-largest motorcoach services provider in the U.S., after Coach USA. Its 31 bus subsidiaries operate in 38 states and produced revenues of \$330 million last year.

Terms of the deal, which is

expected to close early next year, were not disclosed. The transaction is subject to approval by the U.S. Surface Transportation Board, which already has given the deal its pro-forma preliminary OK. Final approval is likely, pending any protests.

Craig Lentzsch, CEO of Coach America, said the change in ownership will help the company grow and develop.

"We are pleased to join with Fenway Partners to further enhance and accelerate Coach America's trajectory of operational and financial success. As we work with Fenway to take advantage of strategic opportunities we

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8 ▶

Expo Drives into New Orleans/See Special Section

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New service takes aim at brokers

SEATTLE — Just over a year ago, Charter Bus America launched an online reservation system for the motorcoach industry.

Now, the company is back with a new service designed to help charter bus companies compete more effectively with bus brokers on the Internet.

Essentially, the new marketing service gets charter bus companies on the first page when a potential customer uses a major Internet search engine.

The goal, says Charter Bus America CEO Dylan Peterson, is to help bus companies win new business from customers who shop via the Internet, plus help them bypass bus brokers.

“We are helping bus companies beat the brokers,” said Peterson.

“These days, customers start shopping by going to the Internet, but all they find on the search engines are a bunch of bus brokers instead of actual motorcoach companies.

We think that is a problem and we’re helping to fix it by placing bus companies on the first pages

of Google, Yahoo and MSN,” said Peterson.

“We know customers and motorcoach operators prefer to work with each other directly rather than through a middleman,” he continued. “We’re helping to fix it.”

Priority One Transportation, a Dallas-based motorcoach opera-

‘We want to help motorcoach companies grow their business through better marketing.’

tor and one of the first companies to sign up with the service, is now found on the first page of major search engines when customers search using the popular term: “Dallas charter bus.”

A report provided by Charter Bus America shows that Internet links connecting customers with Priority One Transportation was viewed 646 times in September alone.

“The phone calls and inquiries

have definitely increased. I’ve paid for at least a year’s worth of this advertising just in the first month,” said Dan O’Meara, president of Priority One.

Charter Bus America entered the coach industry last year when it launched the industry’s first Web site that provides automated charter bus quotes to customers online in seconds, much like Expedia and Orbitz do for airline, hotel and car reservations. (See Dec. 15, 2005 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Peterson said his new service complements, rather than conflicts with, his reservation system.

“We want to help motorcoach companies grow their business through better marketing. Some customers appreciate the convenience of shopping through our automated system, while others prefer to go direct to the bus companies.

“The point is, our services help move the industry forward in a healthy and competitive way,” said Peterson.

For more information, go to www.CharterBusAmerica.com.

Wheelchair lift grants go to 91 bus operators

WASHINGTON — Ninety-one motorcoach companies from across the U.S. have been awarded grants to help pay for installing wheelchair lifts in their buses or to buy new coaches with lifts.

The grants, totaling \$7.4 million, were awarded under the U.S. Department of Transportation Over-the-Road Bus Accessibility Program, which has been around for seven years.

Although the federal government is nearly three months into fiscal 2007, the latest wheelchair lift grants are for fiscal 2006.

The Federal Transit Administration, which administers the program, provided no explanation for the tardiness of its announcement of the FY ’06 grants.

Of the \$7.4 million awarded, \$5.6 million went to intercity bus lines and \$1.8 million went to other types of operators, including commuter, charter and tour providers. Nearly 38 percent of the money — \$2.8 million — went to Greyhound Lines.

A total of 127 operators submitted applications, seeking \$35.1 million, with \$17.3 million

requested by line-run companies, and \$17.8 million sought by other types of operators.

The FTA said its selections were based on three factors — each applicant’s responsiveness to criteria laid out in the law that created the program, fleet size, and level of funding received in previous years.

Because demand for the money exceeded supply, most successful applicants received far less funding than requested, and those applicants “with weaker applications were not selected for funding,” the FTA said.

The grant winners will add lifts to 94 new vehicles, retrofit lifts on 118 vehicles, and use \$70,765 for training.

Each company that applied will receive a letter that explains how the FTA made its funding decisions.

Questions about the grants should be directed to the FTA regional administrator in the area where the operator is located. Go to www.fta.dot.gov for a list of FTA regional offices. For general

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THE DOCKET

NTSB wants to ban driver cell phone use

WASHINGTON — The National Transportation Safety Board wants federal and state regulators to forbid motorcoach and school bus drivers from using cell phones while driving, except in emergencies.

The recommendation is contained in an NTSB report on a nonfatal bus accident on the George Washington Memorial Parkway in Alexandria, Va., in November 2004.

The coach that crashed, operated by Eyre Bus Service of Glenelg, Md., was carrying Catholic school students from Massachusetts when it slammed into a low, stone overpass over the parkway, destroying the roof and injuring 11 teenagers on a class trip.

The driver was talking on a hands-free cell phone at the time of the accident, and he told investigators he did not see the signs on the parkway that alert motorists to the height of the overpass. The signs warn that the clearance is 10 feet, 2 inches for the right lane, in which he was driving. The left lane has a 13-foot, 4-inch clearance.

Consistent with the driver's

story was evidence showing he did not apply the brakes before hitting the bridge.

The safety board bemoaned the fact that comprehensive data correlating bus accidents and cell-phone use does not exist, but members said the incident was so troubling they believe that a ban for bus drivers is necessary.

"Professional drivers who have dozens of passengers' lives entrusted to them should devote their full attention to their task," said NTSB Chairman Mark V. Rosenker.

"What we saw in this accident is appalling and could have resulted in great tragedy."

The NTSB concluded that "the driver's cognitive distraction resulting from his use of a hands-free cell phone caused the accident."

But the low clearance of the overpass, which does not meet current standards, also contributed to the accident, the NTSB said.

"Payment for transportation services creates an implicit contract between the passenger and the carrier that the carrier will

transport the passenger safely and not allow the vehicle operator to take unnecessary risks," the board said in its report. "Consequently, these drivers have a special obligation to provide the safest driving environment possible for the passengers in their care."

The Board recommended that the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, all 50 states and the District of Columbia prohibit CDL holders with a passenger-carrying or school bus endorsement from using cell phones while driving those vehicles, except in emergencies.

The NTSB staff wanted a stronger recommendation. It pushed for recommending that the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration ban the use of cell phones by any CDL holder.

The board took a more moderate approach, however, saying that distractions of any kind are a problem and banning cell phones might be any easier answer but not necessarily a solution to everything that distracts drivers.

The board directed the NTSB staff to look into the broader issue

of driver distractions, not just cell phones.

The board also suggested that enforcement would be a problem, particularly for hands-free cell phones since it would be difficult for law enforcement to identify when a driver is actually talking on the phone.

One key recommendation was that bus associations — the United Motorcoach Association, the American Bus Association and others — urge their members to institute policies that restrict cell phone use by drivers.

One bus association, the National School Transportation Association, announced it would consider the NTSB recommendation. The NSTA said its board of directors would look at the issue at its January meeting in Tucson, Ariz.

According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and the Highway Loss Data Institute, California, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey and the District of Columbia currently ban all drivers, not just bus drivers, from driving while talking on a hand-held cellular phone.

Using non-CDL drivers to move trucks costs UPS

WASHINGTON — Sometimes even the biggest need to be reminded that over-the-road vehicles can't be driven by drivers who don't have a CDL when the public is around.

UPS, the trucking and delivery giant, got slapped with a Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration fine for using drivers without commercial driver's licenses to move trucks in a small town terminal.

If the area where the trucks were being moved hadn't been open to the public, UPS would have been in the clear.

The amount of the fine, \$4,080, barely amounts to a slap on the wrist for the \$43-billion, Atlanta-based company. Still, it represents a ding on its record.

In its response to the charges, UPS denied the four violations for which it was cited.

The fine came after FMCSA inspectors got a tip three years ago from UPS drivers who told them the company was using non-CDL drivers to move vehicles around on company lots, a common practice in both the bus and trucking industries. The company also was cited for the two workers not having submitted to pre-employment drug testing.

The terminal where inspectors found two violations is in Owatonna, Minn. The facility includes not only the industrial area where the drivers were ferrying the trucks but also a building where UPS customers can drop off shipments.

"It was an issue of moving the trucks, jockeying them around if you will, in an area that also had public access," said FMCSA spokesman Ian Grossman said. "If there's no public access to the area, it's a totally different story."

In statements to FMCSA investigators, one of two UPS drivers in question said he had wanted to get a CDL but was thwarted by UPS because he would have gotten higher union pay if he got the license.

Ken Presley, vice president of industry relations at the United Motorcoach Association, said coach operators frequently ask him about the issue.



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Revised rules get closer for new bus, truck operators

WASHINGTON — The White House Office of Management and Budget has signed off on proposed regulations that would raise the standard of compliance for passing a new-entrant safety audit.

The approval will allow the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to publish a notice of proposed rulemaking on new-entrant audits in the near future.

The FMCSA is pursuing the new-entrant rulemaking because of a federal appeals court ruling of a year ago that said the agency's regulations for entry-level driver training are inadequate, and the FMCSA's own experience with the current program, which is now 2½ years old.

In addition to tighter standards and clarification of existing rules, the FMCSA will propose a separate application procedure and

Fees suggested for new system

WASHINGTON — The board setting up the program that will replace the Single State Registration System has approved a fee structure that is not favorable to a large number of bus and motorcoach operators.

Meeting by conference call last month, the board of the Unified Carrier Registration Agreement, as the new program is called, approved a fee structure with six brackets.

As noted in the Dec. 1 issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*, the fee brackets for the UCRA are graduated according to the number of buses or trucks operated by companies subject to the system.

The brackets and proposed fees are: 0-1 vehicle, \$75 a year; 2-5 vehicles, \$145; 6-20 vehicles, \$425; 21-100 vehicles, \$1,470; 101-1,000 vehicles, \$7,000, and more than 1,000 vehicles, \$37,500.

Once the board submits its recommendation to the U.S. Department of Transportation, the agency has 90 days under the law to set them for next year.

Victor Parra, president and CEO of the United Motorcoach Association and a member of an industry advisory committee to the UCRA plan, said he was "quite concerned" about the fee for the 21-100 bracket "since a very large portion of our industry falls into that group.

"I've offered as a counter an additional bracket of 21-50 with a fee of \$850. Unfortunately," said Parra, "I'm told that only six categories are allowed. But I'm not giving up on this."

safety oversight system for motor carriers based outside North America.

The goal of the new-entrant regulations is to improve the FMCSA ability to identify at risk new-entrant bus and truck companies, and assure deficiencies in basic safety management controls

are corrected before the new entrant is granted permanent registration.

All new entrants would continue to receive educational information on how to comply with the safety regulations and be given an opportunity to correct any deficiencies found.

For a ton of background on the rulemaking, visit <http://dms.dot.gov/search> and search Docket No. 11061.

The White House has one other FMCSA proposal under consideration that could impact the bus and motorcoach industry: use of electronic onboard recorders for

hours-of-service compliance.

In September, the White House cleared a final rule regarding supporting documents for drivers' logs. But the FMCSA has delayed publishing the rule, however, saying it needs time to train field personnel to ensure clarity and uniform enforcement nationwide.

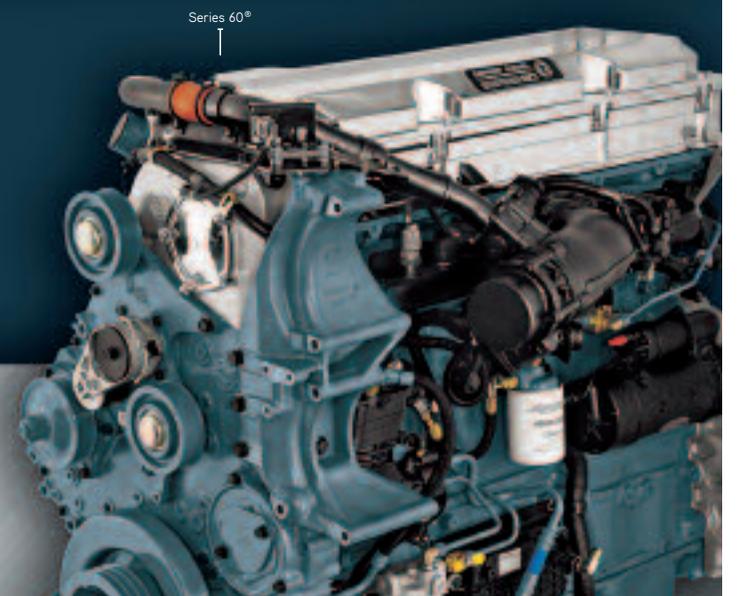


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Wichita Transit sets charter hearing

WICHITA, Kan. — Wichita Transit has scheduled a public hearing Dec. 21, to get input from private bus operators and the general public on a variety of special community events that require charter bus service.

The notice for the public hearing issued by the transit agency appears to violate Federal Transit Administration charter service regulations because it implies that some of the services must be provided by "fully-accessible trolley" buses.

FTA rules prohibit transit agencies from specifying the type of equipment that must be used

when willing-and-able private bus operators provide charter service.

The public hearing will be at 10 a.m. Dec. 21 in the Wichita Transit Operations Center at 777 E. Waterman.

Among the "special events" mentioned in the notice requiring charter service are air shows, Wichita State University games, a "nationwide" golf tournament, and River Festival events.

"Private operators (attending the hearing) should not only express the willingness to do these public services with fully accessible vehicles, but they should also

show the ability to actually provide these services," the transit agency said in its notice.

"If no input is received by private charter operators who are willing and able to provide charter service as mentioned above, Wichita Transit shall provide said trolley charter services and special event public transportation services using equipment and facilities funded under the FTA act."

Written comments and inquiries should be directed to: Jay Banasiak, General Manager, Wichita Transit, 777 E. Waterman, Wichita, KS 67202. Phone: (316) 265-7221.

Charter operators line up to provide 'super' service

MIAMI — Scores of motorcoach operators have apparently responded to the revised charter service notice issued last month in connection with next year's Super Bowl.

The United Motorcoach Association reports it has heard from numerous operators that are "willing and able" to provide transportation for the game, which will be Feb. 4 in Miami. (See Dec. 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

In a letter, UMA reminded Miami-Dade Transit that private operators must get first crack at any charter work offered in connection with the Super Bowl, and it put the transit system on notice that it intends to monitor compliance.

"As you are aware, regulations prohibit transit recipients of federal funds to provide charter service if there is at least one private operator willing and able to provide the charter service," wrote UMA Vice President Ken Presley.

"We fully anticipate Miami-Dade Transit will notify Gameday Management (the transportation coordinator for the Super Bowl) of your complete withdrawal of offering charter service, affording them ample time to fully implement the services of the private operators in the region," Presley wrote.

He added that UMA "will have observers on site to assure complete compliance."

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 offer service. UMA urges operators to take the time to respond to these notices:

Corvallis, Ore. Deadline: Dec. 22, 2006. Write to: Michelle Rhoads, Transportation Leadworker, City of Corvallis Public Works Dept. P.O. Box 1083, Corvallis, OR 97339. Phone: (541) 766-6916. Call Lisa [at (541) 754-1759] for a list of specific charter-type events.

Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell and Tazewell counties, Va. Dead-

line: Dec. 27, 2006. Write to: Diana Wallace, Executive Director, Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens, P.O. Box 765, Cedar Bluff, VA 24609. Phone: (276) 964-4915.

Santa Clarita Valley, Calif. Deadline: Jan. 5, 2007. Write to: Jeff O'Keefe, Transit Manager, City of Santa Clarita, 28250 Constellation Rd., Santa Clarita, CA 91355. Phone: (661) 259-6309.

Greater Roanoke, Va. Deadline: Jan. 11, 2007. Write to: William Holdren, Assistant General Manager, Greater Roanoke Transit Co., P.O. Box 13247 (1108 Campbell Ave., S.E.), Roanoke, VA 24032. Phone: (540) 982-0305.



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Coach America

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will maintain Coach America's unwavering commitment to the highest quality service for all passengers."

A nice fit

In its announcement, Fenway Partners said Coach America combines two of the investment company's areas of focused activity: transportation/logistics and value-added distribution.

"Coach America is an industry leading business with unmatched expertise in providing superior service on a local level across many key U.S. regions," said Mac LaFollette, a managing director at Fenway.

"As one of the few operators with the scale and resources to compete in a fragmented industry, Coach America has established itself as a profitable company with leading positions in nearly every market in which it competes, excellent geographic positioning, a solid organizational infrastructure and tremendous potential for growth. These characteristics make it an excellent fit with Fenway's focused investment strategy on core sectors," LaFollette added.

Coach America maintains the nation's second-largest fleet of passenger transportation vehicles, with more than 2,600 motorcoaches, midsize buses, trolleys, double-decker buses, vans and other vehicles.

The company was formed just over three years ago when Coach USA sold more than 30 of its subsidiary bus and coach companies to Kohlberg & Co. for \$155 million. After the sale, many of the smaller operations were shutdown or absorbed by larger units.

Rapid growth

Since 2003, Lentzsch has more than doubled the overall size of the company, with acquisitions from Maryland and Florida, to Idaho and Oregon.

Today, Coach America operations are focused in the West, Southwest, Pacific Coast, Southeast and South Central U.S., and it does business under a variety of brand names, including Coach USA, American Coach Lines, Gray Line, Arrow Stage Lines, All West, Raz Transportation and Kerrville Bus.

The company and its 5,000 employees provide charters, commuter runs, airport and casino shuttles, rail crew transportation,

contract services for municipalities and corporations, and tours and sightseeing.

"As an active investor in the transportation sector, we bring extensive experience in the industry to our partnership with Coach America," said Marc Kramer, another managing director at Fenway Partners and head of the firm's transportation/logistics unit.

"Considering Coach America's significant competitive advantages, talented management team and employee base, strong history of both organic performance and successful acquisition integration, and the consistently positive industry trends, we see substantial opportunity for the company's continued growth and expansion."

Fenway Partners, which also maintains offices in Los Angeles, has \$1.6 billion in assets under management.

Among companies it owns are sporting goods manufacturer Easton Bell Sports, school yearbook and class-ring manufacturer American Achievement, transportation-and-logistics provider Greatwide, expedited ground transportation provider Panther Expedited Services, and intermodal trucking service provider RoadLink USA.

Coach USA/Coach Canada post strong financial results

PERTH, Scotland—Stagecoach Group has reported its Coach USA and Coach Canada subsidiaries turned in robust financial results for the six months ended Oct. 31.

Stagecoach Group chairman, Robert Speirs, said the results reflect a continuing focus on revenue growth and close management of controllable costs.

The gains came despite losses in the new megabus.com curbside service that was launched by Coach USA in the Midwest earlier this year (see April 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*). Megabus.com had revenue of \$2.2 million during the six months ended Oct. 31, and lost \$1 million.

Total revenue at Coach USA and Coach Canada for the half-year ended Oct. 31, was \$253.5 million, a 7.7 percent increase over same-period 2005 revenue of \$235.4 million. Excluding the impact of two upstate New York units that were shutdown, revenue was up 10.8 percent on a comparable basis.

Operating profit for the six months of this year was \$31.2 million, versus \$28.3 million last year.

That put the operating margin for Coach USA/Coach Canada at 12.3 percent this year, versus 12 percent a year ago.

Interestingly, the operating margin for Coach USA/Coach Canada was higher than the margin posted by Stagecoach Group bus units in the United Kingdom. That figure was 11.3 percent.

Coach USA/Coach Canada has a combined fleet of 2,900 vehicles, while Stagecoach operates 7,000 buses across the U.K.

Stagecoach Group CEO Brian Souter said Coach USA and Coach Canada continue to experience strong growth in their sightseeing, charter, contract, commuter and scheduled services.

Fuel costs continue to exert cost pressures, according to Souter, who noted that a \$10 per barrel movement in the price of crude oil can impact total Stagecoach Group fuel costs by \$16 million. For that reason, the company maintains an ongoing hedging program.

For more information, including results for Stagecoach Group, go to www.stagecoachgroup.com.

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Michelin, WABCO launch tire monitoring system

GREENVILLE, S.C. — Michelin and WABCO plan to begin jointly selling their Integrated Vehicle Tire Pressure Monitoring System in the North American bus and truck market. The system has been available in Europe since 2003.

The IVTM system offers real-time pressure information that is critical to drivers and fleet owners, said Marc Laferriere, vice president of marketing for Michelin Americas Truck Tires. "The on-board monitor gives the driver a constant readout of tire pressure ... to ease worries about incorrect inflation pressure, slow leaks and related breakdowns."

Using an algorithm that compares information between and across axles, the system monitors tire pressure and can warn of improper pressure and slow leaks. The majority of all tire failures start with slow leaks, which can be prevented by IVTM, said Laferriere.

The system consists of external wheel-mounted modules that are connected to the tire valves with pneumatic hoses. The modules

regularly measure and transmit tire inflation pressure data via radio frequency to an electronic control unit that transmits the information to a dash-mounted display.

The dashboard display features visual and acoustic signals to warn drivers of abnormally low tire pressure, slow leaks and tire position. Once a potential problem is detected, the in-bus display monitor warning lamps also advise the driver of the appropriate corrective action.

The system can be retrofitted and is available now.

Meanwhile, SmarTire System, another manufacturer of wireless tire monitoring systems, has filed a patent for an external valve sensor used for its pressure monitoring system for commercial buses and trucks.

"SmarTire's external valve sensors will reduce the installation costs of tire pressure monitoring systems and enable faster implementation for large fleets during retrofit in the aftermarket," said David Warkentin, vice president of sales and marketing for SmarTire.

Slow tire leak linked to crash

RAYBROOK, N.Y. — A tiny puncture in a steer-axle tire is being blamed for the worst bus crash on New York highways in more than four years.

A Greyhound coach heading to Montreal in August crashed through a guard rail and over an embankment, killing five people, including the driver.

The last time that many people were killed in a New York bus crash was in June 2002, when a driver for Coach USA fell asleep and his bus ran off Interstate 90 near Victor, N.Y., also killing five people. The driver survived that crash.

Announcing the results of the investigation into the August crash, which saw some passengers thrown through windows and others crushed in the wreckage as the bus rolled over and over again onto its roof, New York State Police Maj. Richard C. Smith Jr. said a slow leak in the

left front tire led to the tragedy.

The tire, losing pressure and heating up with roadway friction, finally blew as the driver was passing a tractor-trailer near Elizabethtown, N.Y.

Displaying photos of skid marks and rubber burned into the pavement, Smith said the driver, 52-year-old Ronald Burgess, did his best to avoid the crash, but he may, in fact, have exacerbated the bus' downward spiral over the embankment as he slammed on the anti-lock brakes, propelling the coach further to the left.

Smith took great pains to absolve Burgess of any responsibility, however, seeking to dispel rumors that circulated after the Aug. 28 crash.

Burgess had no history of accidents or violations in the previous three years. He had neither alcohol nor drugs in his blood. No music player, cell phone or other distract-

ing device was found on his body. And none of the surviving passengers reported anything that suggested Burgess was overly tired, much less falling asleep at the wheel, Smith said.

Nor could Burgess, nor anyone else, have been expected to detect the tiny puncture that began the chain reaction.

However, the driver's excessive speed may have contributed to the magnitude of the accident, but it was not a cause, Smith said.

"I want to believe his actions helped to save lives," said Smith. "Going from 78 miles per hour to zero in six seconds, there's a lot of energy that has to be dissipated. It could have been much worse."

Of the 52 passengers on board, 48 were injured.

The National Transportation Safety Board also is investigating the crash, but its report is not imminent.

Is it snowing in British Columbia? Find out free

VICTORIA, British Columbia — British Columbia has long maintained a hotline where drivers can learn the condition of roads in the mountainous Canadian province.

The service is operated by the

B.C. Ministry of Transportation, and has previously cost 75 cents a call. Now, a call is free from anywhere in Canada or the U.S. Transportation Minister Kevin Falcon says it's more important that drivers be safe.

The number to call is (800) 550-4997. Or, the information can be found on the ministry's Web site, www.drivebc.ca, which has more details, including live traffic images from 70 cameras.



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Charter rules

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

proposed rules, while the issues left unsettled when the talks ended will be determined by the FTA.

Rewriting of the rules was ordered by Congress last year in a bold attempt to bring an end to the long-running squabble between the private and public sectors over charter service. Their differences have led to a steady flow of complaints of violations filed by private operators against transit agencies across the country. (See related articles.)

Under current rules, transit agencies planning to provide charter service must notify the motorcoach industry in advance and then step aside if a "willing and able" private carrier says it wants the job.

Lines drawn

Motorcoach operators have complained for years that transit agencies regularly skirt or break the rules and take lucrative special event charter business away from them by disguising it as public transit. Their trick, the operators contend, is to temporarily extend regular transit routes to the sites of the events and then pass up people waiting at regular stops in favor of going directly to the events.

Additionally, the private carriers suggest that transit agencies attract some charter work by dangling below-market rates in front of potential customers — rates they stress are made possible because transit operations and equipment are subsidized by taxpayer dollars flowing through the federal government.

The transit agencies argue they are simply filling a public need and doing work that private com-

panies usually do not want. While the FTA had the authority to redo the controversial rules on its own, it turned instead to the private and public carriers and set up the negotiated rulemaking sessions in hopes the two sides could get together and write new regulations that would settle the feud.

Although successful in a number of areas, the two sides remained sharply split on several critical issues, all of which now will be decided by the FTA lawyers.

Outcome expected

The two sides acknowledged after the final meeting that they were not surprised at the outcome, although they had hoped that more could have been done.

"The process came to its logical conclusion because no one ever thought we could agree on everything," said Victor Parra, president and chief executive of the United Motorcoach Association and a member of the negotiating committee. "We knew where they were coming from, so I'm not surprised with how it turned out."

He said how well the two sides did in stressing their positions on the disputed issues now will show up in the draft of the rules that will be prepared by the FTA lawyers. "The proof will be in the paper," he added.

Daniel Duff, chief council of the American Public Transit Association and also a committee member, said the issues that were left unresolved have been debated by the two sides for years and he was not surprised by the outcome either. "Although we weren't able to come to an agreement on a number of key issues, we did agree on some issues that should benefit both sides," he said.

Among the key issues that were not settled were the definition of "charter," the use of administrative law judges to settle disputes and public transit agencies being required to charge at least enough to recover their costs when they do charters.

'We don't think you should be giving away charter work for free.'

Both sides exchanged proposed charter definitions several times before they gave up and said they were too far apart to reach an accommodation.

While they did agree to exclude the word "exclusive" — a major sticking point in the past — from the definition, the transit agencies insisted that it contain the words "not open to the general public." The private operators countered that the inclusion of the phrase would allow transit agencies to simply continue to temporarily extend existing routes out to the sites of special events.

Sticking point No. 2

The proposal to use administrative law judges to settle formal complaints of charter service rules violations was pushed by the motorcoach operators who argued that the decision maker should be independent of the FTA, which now uses regional administrators to judge the complaints. The transit agencies said they were satisfied with the current system and wanted to keep it intact.

Horner had indicated at an earlier meeting that the FTA liked the idea of turning over the responsibility of judging complaints to an

independent entity.

Motorcoach coach carriers also asked to include wording in the rules that would require transit agencies to at least cover their costs when they do charter work for government-funded human services organizations and non-profit groups. The transit agencies objected, suggesting that the private carriers should not be concerned about how the agencies handle charges for charters.

"We don't think you should be giving away charter work for free," contended committee member Gladys Gillis, president of the Northwest Motorcoach Association, who added that the organizations receive federal funding specifically for transportation and it should be used for that purpose.

The cost recovery issue surfaced after both sides agreed to have the rules contain a series of exemptions that would allow the transit agencies to do some charter work without first offering it to private carriers. Federally funded groups that serve the elderly, poor, disabled and others in need of special government assistance were among those exemptions.

The exemptions also would permit transit agencies to provide charter service to government officials, although the two sides were unable to agree on the amount of those types of charters that should be allowed. The motorcoach carriers wanted it held to 80 hours each year, while the transit agencies held out for 125 hours.

More agreement

Both sides also bought into a proposal that would allow them to seek "advisory opinions" from the FTA if there were questions about a charter job that a transit agency was planning to do. However, they

parted on a companion provision that would allow the FTA to issue a cease and desist order against the transit agency if it found that the planned charter would be a violation of the rules.

There was strong agreement on an expanded use of the Internet for transit agencies to notify the motorcoach industry of pending charter work and for the private operators to respond.

Under the proposed rules, motorcoach carriers would have to register on an FTA Web site in the zip codes in which they are interested in serving and the transit agencies would notify them electronically when they want to take on a charter. If a transit agency were to receive a call from someone seeking a charter job that the transit agency knew it could not legally perform, it would refer the caller to the Web site where the names and telephone numbers of private charter companies could be found.

The private carriers were especially pleased with the registration process because they would be able to stop bus brokers from taking part. Under the proposal, in order to register on the Web site, a business would have to have a federal operating authority certificate, which brokers usually do not have.

While a number of key issues were left at the bargaining table, both sides will have one final shot at trying to convince the FTA to accept some of their ideas.

Under the rulemaking process, the FTA will be required to hold at least one — and potentially two — 60- to 90-day public comment period and, as the meeting ended, committee members already were discussing possible comments that they might want to offer.

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Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

ISSUE NO. 91

A PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED MOTORCOACH ASSOCIATION

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Bonanza Bus Lines founder, George Sage, dies suddenly

BRISTOL, R.I. — George M. Sage, who founded one of the most successful regional line-run companies in the second half of the 20th century, Bonanza Bus Lines, died here Dec. 4. He was 74.

Mr. Sage, a dedicated tennis player, was playing his favorite game when he collapsed. He was taken to Rhode Island Hospital where he died.

While Mr. Sage was a successful entrepreneur, business executive and bus operator, he also was known throughout Rhode Island for his extraordinary civic involvement and philanthropy.

His generosity extended to the motorcoach industry, with one of his last gifts a \$50,000 donation to aid fund-raising at the Museum of Bus Transportation in Hershey, Pa. (See article on Page 15.)

Immediately upon Mr. Sage's death, the tributes to him and the condolences to his family poured in. The largest newspaper in Rhode Island, the *Providence Journal*, called Mr. Sage a transportation icon, sports enthusiast, philanthropist and community leader.

The diversity of the tributes

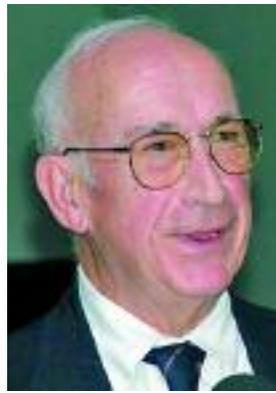
included the president of Babson College in Wellesley, Mass., the president and CEO of the American Hockey League, and a wide spectrum of individuals from the bus industry, ranging from a retired Greyhound driver to the president and CEO of Peter Pan Bus Lines.

"George was a friend and colleague, mentor, philanthropist and most importantly a devoted husband, friend and grandfather," said Peter A. Picknelly, president of Peter Pan. "George advanced his bus line from a single vehicle transporting apple pickers to and from work to one of the largest and most well-respected bus companies in the Northeast."

Last May, Peter Pan's terminal in Providence was renamed the George M. Sage Terminal at a ceremony attended by state and local officials. Following his death, a wreath was placed in the terminal in his honor.

Born in Rochester, N.Y., Mr. Sage was a graduate of Deerfield Academy and Babson College.

Always an avid hockey enthusiast, he purchased the legendary Rhode Island Reds minor-league



George Sage

hockey team in 1969 and owned it for seven trying years. The team folded at the end of the 1976-77 season. He was given a Tops Award three years ago by the Reds' Heritage Society, a nonprofit group that honors those who have contributed outstanding service to the hockey club and to the community.

Mr. Sage played an important role in the development of downtown Providence by supporting the construction of the Providence Civic Center, now called the Dunkin' Donuts Center.

His philanthropy and civic involvement included a leadership

role in creating a performing arts facility at St. Andrew's School and long-time support of the United Way. He served as general campaign chairman in 1971, several years as treasurer of the United Way International, and chairman in 1987.

The United Way of South-eastern New England presented him with its prestigious Alexis de Tocqueville Society Award.

He also was a director of Junior Achievement, a trustee of Providence Country Day School and a member of the Rhode Island Commodore Commission. He was an incorporator of Johnson & Wales University and a director and member of the executive committee of New England Electric System.

One admirer called Mr. Sage a "community leader without peer."

Mr. Sage got into the bus business when he purchased a half interest in a one-bus company that transported apple pickers from Albion, N.Y., to the orchards near Lake Ontario. Building on the success of that small operation, he purchased other bus lines, includ-

ing the Short Line Bus Co., of Newport, R.I., in 1955.

He eventually called his growing operation Bonanza Bus Lines but he apparently did not, as legend has it, name the company after the hit television series of the same name that ran on NBC from 1959-1973. He operated the business for 43 years.

In 1998, Mr. Sage sold his company to Coach USA during the height of its consolidation drive. Less than five years later, Peter Pan bought Bonanza and other regional operators from Coach USA.

Peter Pan officially retired the Bonanza Bus Lines brand simultaneously with the renaming of the terminal for Mr. Sage.

Mr. Sage is survived by his widow, Barbara 'Boo' Sage; a son, George 'Jim' Sage Jr.; a daughter, Anne 'Twink' Sage, and two grandchildren.

A memorial has been established in his name at St. Andrew's School, 63 Federal Rd., Barrington, RI 02806, and with the United Way of Rhode Island. Go to www.uwri.com or call (401) 444-0611.

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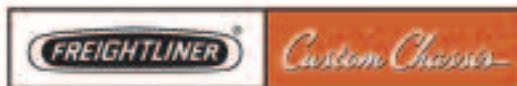
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Peter Pan Bonanza: \$88,381
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Peter Pan Bus Lines: \$144,755
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Plymouth & Brockton: \$55,620
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J&R Tours Ltd.: \$25,200
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Lake Worth, Fla.
Morgan & Sons: \$41,000
Greensboro, N.C.
Southern Coach Co.: \$29,800
Durham, N.C.

Starkville Trailways: \$46,856
Starkville, Miss.

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Colonial Coach Lines: \$146,000
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Jefferson Lines: \$77,670
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K&K Bus Lines: \$25,000
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Lakefront Lines: \$75,600
Brook Park, Ohio
Minnesota Coaches: \$30,760
Hastings, Minn.
Prairie Trailways: \$25,300: Chicago
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Gulf Coast Transport: \$42,310
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Colorado Springs

FTA Region IX

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All West Coachlines: \$39,155
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Amador Stage Lines: \$90,020
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RDH Transportation: \$18,451
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Silverado Stages: \$102,300
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Solazteca: \$33,400: Los Angeles
Transportes Intercalif. \$41,000
Los Angeles
Triple J Tours: \$21,995: Las Vegas
Via Adventures: \$28,706
Merced, Calif.

FTA Region X

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Anchorage
Wheatland Express: \$38,863
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Caterpillar C13 engine gets OK from U.S. EPA

MOSSVILLE, Ill. — Caterpillar Inc. has received certification from the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency for the 2007 version of the engine it markets to the motorcoach industry, the C13.

The C15 engine, which is primarily used in trucks, also was certified by EPA.

Both engines use Cat's ACERT technology to reduce exhaust emissions. Cat said the approvals position the company to meet future EPA emissions regulations.

"These certifications demonstrate that engines with ACERT technology for 2007 are ready to serve our customers in North America," said James J. Parker, vice president of Caterpillar Power Systems Marketing Division.

For 2007, the ACERT technology relies on four basic systems to lower emissions — air management, precision combustion, advanced electronics and exhaust after-treatment.

Cat says the four systems decrease particulate matter, oxides of nitrogen and hydrocarbon emissions while preserving the engine's reliability and durability, which keep operating costs low.

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Bus museum purchases its own storage facility

HERSHEY, Pa. — The Museum of Bus Transportation has acquired something it has been wanting for a long time: a permanent place to store and maintain buses that are not on display.

Until now, the museum has had to rent storage space.

The building, formerly a garage, has room for 12 buses and already is adapted for bus maintenance and repair. It's also conveniently located in Hummelstown, Pa., a mere one-and-a-half miles from the museum in Hershey.

In the view of museum President John Dockendorf, the new storage facility is ideally located. He notes that many of the museum's antique buses are only "marginally roadworthy" and should not be driven very far.

In fact, some cannot be driven and must be towed to and from the museum display area.

The only down side is the building's size. Normally 9 of the museum's approximately 30 antique buses are on display on the museum floor at any one time. The new facility holds 12. That means a few buses must remain in the hands of volunteers who provide storage for them when they come off display.

Dockendorf believes the museum houses the largest indoor display of antique buses in the country. He says there are larger displays elsewhere, but they are usually outside and, of course, the weather deteriorates the vehicles.

The public will have an opportunity to view the new building in June. The museum plans to conduct its 2007 Spring Fling there June 2.

Good time to give

The storage facility was purchased for \$340,000. The museum made a down payment of \$100,000 and has a mortgage for the balance, which it expects to pay off with donations. Early contributions through the end of October had reached \$50,000.

Anyone considering making a donation to the museum may "double" their gift by doing so before the end of the year.

Prior to his death this month, George Sage, former owner of Bonanza Bus Lines, made provisions to match all donations to the museum received before Dec. 31. (See obituary on Page 12.)

The museum qualifies as a charitable organization for tax purposes.

Those interested in donating to the museum can use its secure Web site at www.buseum.org, or mail a check to Museum of Bus

Transportation, 161 Museum Dr., Hershey, PA 17033.

For more information, contact Pastor Daniel Lehman, vice president and fleet manager, at icarrythelight4god@msn.com, or Dockendorf at (717) 787-1220.

Operator honored as leading entrepreneur

LANHAM, Md. — Marcia Fields Milton of First Priority Trailways has been named the top entrepreneur of Prince George's County, Md., by the Prince George's Chamber of Commerce.

She was nominated for the award by chamber members and named the winner by a committee of previous recipients.

Milton founded her company seven years ago with one bus, two drivers and \$50,000 she had saved.

Today, First Priority operates a fleet of 17 vehicles and has 70 employees. Revenues are expected to reach \$3.5 million this year. The company is based in District Heights, Md.

A graduate of Hampton Uni-

versity in Hampton, Va., Milton worked at a community hospital in Washington, D.C., directing its school-to-work transition program and organizing field trips and college tours before launching her company.

Last month, Milton was elected to the board of the United Motorcoach Association.

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