

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

Operators find more revenue by diversifying businesses

New ventures can eliminate 'spikes'

When charter business is slow, many motorcoach operators think they have few options to take up the slack and sustain their revenue.

That's why industry experts have been sounding off for years about the need for them to

diversify.

While the idea hasn't caught on with everyone — yet, more and more coach operators around the country appear to be finding new ways to bolster their revenue stream.

Many are adding shuttle services. Some are marketing their coaches to other carriers that might need extra equipment from time-to-time. Others are opening their mainte-

nance facilities to visiting carriers, or actually promoting repair services to other operators. And a few are even testing modified line-run or transit opportunities.

In New York, Paradise Trailways has redesigned its business plan to include several new ventures that not only help bring in cash when its mainstay charter business is down, but also produce

a steady flow of revenue when things are going well.

The latest one introduced by the Nassau County motorcoach operator is the marketing of its maintenance facility to other coach companies in the New York City area and visiting carriers that might need emergency repairs or other services for their buses.

"As an operator, we have a real

understanding of how critical it is to have help, sometimes in a hurry," said Godfrey LeBron, company vice president.

The Paradise shop is equipped to handle everything from bus washing, to lavatory fixes, to major engine repairs. It also has a service truck available to respond quickly to road breakdowns and other

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12 ►

Obama aides are briefed on coach issues by UMA

WASHINGTON — Top executives of the United Motorcoach Association and UMA's Washington lobbyist met with members of President-elect Barack Obama's U.S. Department of Transportation transition team to discuss key motorcoach industry issues.

Victor S. Parra, UMA president and CEO; Ken Presley, vice president of industry relations, and Becky Webber, lobbyist, not only briefed the transition team on important bus and motorcoach industry issues, but also provided perspectives, and identified interests and needs.

The goal of the UMA representatives was to assist the incoming administration in establishing priorities for the ground passenger

transportation industry. (See related stories on Page 5.)

"We were pleased to be asked to provide the Obama Administration with information and the perspectives of the motorcoach industry," said Parra.

"We trust the information provided will give them insight into our industry and help provide the foundation for a productive relationship as we move forward."

Among the issues and topics discussed during the meeting was the Federal Transit Administration's revised charter bus rule that went into effect at the end of April. The UMA representatives stressed the importance of the rule to the motorcoach industry.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 ►



New Home for an 80-Year-Old. This rare 1929 Pierce Arrow is the latest addition to the fleet of the Museum of Bus Transportation in Hershey, Pa. Pierce Arrow, which produced luxury autos and trucks, made a few buses in the late 1920s and early 1930s when the auto market slumped. The livery on the bus was created for the 2004 film *Ray*, a biopic of musical great Ray Charles. The bus was used in the movie. Early in his career, Charles was a member of a band led by Lowell Fulson, an important figure in West Coast blues in the 1940s and 50s. The bus was donated to the museum by Robert Walsh of Indianapolis. It arrived in "great shape" but needs some glass replaced.

California complaint pokes at old charter rule weaknesses

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Waiting for a Sacramento Regional Transit Route 75 bus to get you to a hospital?

On March 15 or 16, you were totally out of luck.

The transit authority suspended service on Route 75 on those two days, performing charter runs to an air show instead and charging the air show's organizers

\$30,000 for the service.

On top of that, the transit agency misled the Federal Transit Administration about the air show runs, telling the FTA the service was controlled by the transit system, and the route was only modified to accommodate the air show, according to motorcoach industry executives who investigated the service.

It was a flagrant attempt to circumvent the FTA's old charter service rule, say the industry executives.

The old rule was replaced April 30, with refined requirements and sharper teeth. The presence of a third party alone would have prohibited the service under the new rule.

Additionally, the new rule establishes a series of strict requirements that transit authorities must

follow to assure they don't take charter work away from interested private operators.

"This is likely to be the last case under the old charter service rule. It has some significance in that it demonstrates the failures of the old rule by pointing to the loopholes and lack of enforcement by FTA regional offices," says Ken Presley, vice president of industry

relations for United Motorcoach Association.

'Grade A' example

UMA, along with the California Bus Association, filed a complaint with the Federal Transit Administration on behalf of Amador Stage Lines of Sacramento. "This is a good example to show Con-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10 ►



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Intercity bus traffic grew at a record rate this year

CHICAGO — For the second consecutive year, intercity bus traffic in the United States increased at a near-double digit rate thanks to a variety of factors, ranging from new service to the surge in gasoline prices earlier in the year.

According to a study from DePaul University's Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development, scheduled U.S. intercity bus departures grew 9.8 percent between the fourth quarters of 2007 and 2008.

This marks the second year of robust growth after more than four decades of persistent decline, said the institute. The annualized rate of growth between the second quarter of 2006 and the fourth quarter 2007 was 8.1 percent.

"Driven by downward economic pressures, spiking gas prices and a contraction in the nation's airline industry, the intercity bus industry this year has posted its biggest one-year gain in service in a half century," the study said.

"The growth in intercity bus traffic is being driven by a number of factors, chiefly the spiking price

of fuel over the past year," said Joseph Schwieterman, professor of public service and director of the Chaddick Institute, who headed the study.

"The basic economic efficiencies of bus travel are proving to be extremely attractive in this difficult economic climate."

Most of the growth in bus service was driven by increases in service offered by two companies — megabus.com and BoltBus (a joint venture of Greyhound and Peter Pan bus lines).

The study noted that intercity bus service is most popular between cities 175 to 300 miles apart.

The study also pointed out that due to the significantly higher fuel efficiency per passenger mile achieved through bus travel, the trend toward buses for city-to-city travel produced a bonanza in reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

Approximately 36,000 tons of carbon dioxide were kept out of the atmosphere this year as a result of the shift, according to estimates compiled for the study.

Gearing up for belts

School bus makers say they'll be ready for 2011

WASHINGTON — School bus manufacturers have begun work toward meeting new federal mandates that give them three years to begin installing seatbelts in certain models and until next October to equip new buses with seats with higher backs.

According to the October ruling from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, all school buses manufactured after Oct. 20, will be required to have 24-inch-high seat backs, instead of the 20-inch seat backs currently required. The seats also must have self-latching mechanisms for seat-bottom cushions.

The NHTSA ruling further requires that all smaller Type A school buses with a gross vehicle weight rating of less than 10,000

pounds manufactured after Oct. 20, 2011, must be equipped with lap-and-shoulder seatbelts.

The higher seat backs will help prevent taller and heavier children from being thrown over the seat in a crash, while the lap-and-shoulder seatbelts will provide more protection on smaller buses that might suffer more damage in a crash.

David Hillman of IC Corporation, the nation's largest school bus maker and a division of Navistar, said his company has been testing the requirements formalized in the new ruling for more than a decade.

"We are not surprised by these regulations and our product plans are not changing as a result," said Hillman.

Rocks in the road?

However, the road to seatbelts in school buses may have some bumps along the way.

Ron Smith, director of marketing for Blue Bird Corporation, sees funding as a potential problem.

"The trouble with a federal government (seatbelt) mandate without federal government funding is that the states and school districts, already strapped for financing operations, increasing fuel costs and the increase in bus costs as a result of federal safety and emission controls, may be forced to make fewer buses available to students needing transport and result in more of these students being forced to use a less

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 ►

While intercity bus service was growing during the year, other forms of long-distance travel experienced declines — especially air travel, which has seen a roughly 8 percent decline seat-miles provided between the fourth quarters

of 2007 and 2008.

Travel by private vehicle was down 3.3 percent for the first eight months of 2008, compared to the year earlier period.

Train ridership, as reported by Amtrak, however, was up over last

year. The number of seat-miles on trains provided so far this year has increased about 3.3 percent. The majority of train service growth during the past year occurred in the Northeast, especially between New York and Washington, D.C.



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THE DOCKET

Atlanta to get \$110 million to reduce traffic congestion

ATLANTA — The federal government plans to invest \$110 million to support an innovative state plan to reduce traffic congestion in metropolitan Atlanta.

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters, who announced the infusion of federal money, said the plan will allow more commuters to take advantage of Interstate 85's HOV lanes northeast of the city, and will allow for the establishment of new high-speed commuter bus service into downtown.

"This ambitious plan will tame traffic, pump new money into the region's transit services and redefine the way people use I-85," said Peters. "The goal is simple, make commutes reliable, not ridiculous."

According to the Texas Transportation Institute's 2007 Urban Mobility Report, metro Atlanta is tied for the second-highest level of traffic congestion as measured

in terms of hours of delay per rush hour driver. Metro Los Angeles has the nation's worst traffic congestion, followed by Atlanta, San Francisco-Oakland and metro Washington, D.C., which are all tied for second.

The first phase of the Atlanta project will institute a network consisting of dynamically-priced high occupancy toll lanes on I-85, stretching from I-285 to Old Peachtree Road by January 2011.

Future phases of the plan will include a 49-mile network of additional HOV-to-HOT lane conversions along I-85, I-75 and I-20.

Similar HOT lane projects have been implemented in Minneapolis and Southern California, and these areas have already seen a reduction in the amount of congestion during peak travel times.

Also included in the grant is \$30 million for transit service enhancement that will operate on the newly converted expressways.

Rulemakings linger as Bush leaves

WASHINGTON — Although there are barely five weeks left in the Bush Administration, lobbyists and others who monitor the U.S. Department of Transportation still expect it to issue important rulemakings before the Obama Administration takes over.

Among the rulemakings that would impact the motorcoach industry and could be acted on before Jan. 20 are:

- Electronic onboard record-

ers. The final rule was recently sent for review to the White House Office of Management and Budget. The rule would likely include incentives for most of the over-the-road truck and bus industries to adopt electronic onboard recorders but mandates them for at-risk, historically noncompliant carriers

- A new carrier safety audit final rule. This rule would attempt to eliminate unsafe carriers on the front end. It could include 15 vio-

lations that if found during a mandatory audit would end in automatic suspension.

- Merging a driver's medical certification with his or her CDL.

Last month, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration announced a final rule for hours-of-service for truckers. The final rule was unchanged from the interim final rule. It likely will be challenged (again) in court and reopened by the new administration.

Mich. may join UCRA, adopt HOV lanes

LANSING, Mich. — Legislation of interest to motorcoach operators is nearing passage in the Michigan statehouse.

The bills address the Unified Carrier Registration program and high-occupancy vehicle lanes in the state.

A measure in the House Transportation Committee would authorize the state to implement and administer the Unified Carrier

Registration Agreement. It is the federal act that replaces the old Single State Registration System.

The measure — SB1451 — received unanimous consent in the Senate this past summer.

According to a fiscal impact statement attached to the bill, failure to adopt the UCRA fee structure could cost the state its share of interstate motor carrier fees, which is about \$7.5 million annually.

The state House and Senate approved legislation that would authorize Michigan to have high-occupancy vehicle lanes, or HOV lanes. Gov. Jennifer Granholm is expected to endorse the new policy, which would take effect immediately.

One HOV lane exists as a pilot project along a five-mile stretch of Michigan Avenue in Detroit, near the Ambassador Bridge.

I-95 traffic reports coming

ROCKVILLE, Md. — The U.S. Department of Transportation has awarded a \$6.4-million grant to improve data collection and make real-time traffic updates available to drivers along Interstate 95.

The I-95 Corridor Coalition, consisting of transportation departments and tolling authorities from Maine to Florida along I-95, will incorporate an existing data-collection system with other technologies to make traffic updates available via the Web, at information centers, and eventually to drivers by mobile phone.

"This will be extremely helpful, particularly for commercial vehicles that are using the corridor," said George Schoener, the coalition's executive director.

"If you want to, you could just zero in on one of the states, you could look at a region, and look at what's going on with traffic time."

The I-95 Corridor Coalition already is collecting data from GPS-enabled vehicles in a 1,500-mile stretch from North Carolina to New Jersey. The grant will help with pro-

cessing and getting real-time updates to drivers.

The grant will fund a number of things, Schoener said, including speed-measuring devices placed on special cones in construction zones.

"What those cones do is they're able to capture speeds before a work zone, within a work zone and when you're leaving a work zone," he said.

Data will be transmitted to a firm contracted to develop a website and distribute to transportation agencies along the corridor for their use.

Updates in North Carolina will be linked to the state's 5-1-1 information phone system.

The Virginia Department of Transportation will incorporate data into live video feeds of traffic movement in typically congested areas.

The Baltimore-Washington International Airport soon will have kiosks that will provide I-95 traffic updates as people leave the airport, Schoener said.

Colo. hikes intrastate fee big time

DENVER — The Colorado Public Utilities Commission has implemented a 10-fold increase in the annual fee for the vehicles of intrastate for-hire carriers. For more than 25 years, the fee was \$5; it has now been increased to \$50 per vehicle.

There is speculation the large increase was adopted because the Colorado PUC was

not collecting all the money to which it's entitled under the new Unified Carrier Registration Agreement.

One expert on the Unified Carrier Registration system speculated that Colorado's action may mark the first time a state has increased intrastate fees in response to shortfalls in its UCRA collections.

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Lots of names surface for USDOT secretary

WASHINGTON — The names of Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius and former House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt have surfaced as possible candidates to become U.S. Secretary of Transportation in the Obama Administration.

Three other possible candidates are Wisconsin Transportation Secretary Frank Busalacchi, former Deputy Transportation Secretary Mortimer Downey and Jane Garvey, the former head of the Federal Aviation Administration. Both Downey and Garvey are members of the Obama USDOT transition team. (See related story below.)

At the same time, a group of influential California Democrats is making a strong push to have Obama name a regional public transit official, Steve Heminger, his transportation secretary.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., is leading a group of officials who sent a letter to Obama endorsing Heminger, executive director of the San Francisco Bay Area Metropolitan Transportation Commission. The goal of the letter was to push Heminger past the other candidates.

Gephardt served as a congressman from Missouri from 1977-2005. Since his retirement from politics, he has been working as a senior counsel at the global law firm DLA Piper and is a consultant for Goldman Sachs.

Sebelius was elected governor in November 2002 and re-elected

in 2006.

She was preceded by former Kansas Gov. Bill Graves, who is now president and CEO of the American Trucking Associations.

Downey, a USDOT deputy secretary in the Clinton administration, currently is chairman of PB Consult Inc., a firm which special-

izes in putting together public-private partnerships for transportation projects. He also has served as chairman of the Coalition for America's Gateways and Trade Corridors, and is part of a three-man independent review panel charged with evaluating the USDOT's ongoing NAFTA trucking

demonstration program with Mexico.

Garvey currently is on the board at The MITRE Corp., a not-for-profit organization chartered to work in the public interest, where she is an executive vice president and chairman of the transportation practice.

Transition team tackles USDOT

WASHINGTON — President-elect Barack Obama has named a five-person group to oversee the transition for the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The team will conduct a "thorough review" of the department, the president-elect's office said in a statement.

The team consists of:

- Mortimer Downey, a consultant and former USDOT deputy secretary under President Clinton
- Jane Garvey, head of the U.S. public-private partnerships at JPMorgan and former official with both the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Aviation Administration
- Michael Huerta, group president of ACS Transportation Solution and a Clinton-era USDOT official
- John Cullather, the majority staff director for the House Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation
- Carol Carmody, a consultant and former member of the National Transportation Safety Board.

Seth Harris, a professor at New York Law School, is overseeing the transportation group as part of Obama's agency review working group.



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Obama eyes infrastructure

WASHINGTON — Following his inauguration, President-elect Barack Obama will propose an economic-stimulus package that focuses on infrastructure, various news services report.

The package could be three times larger than the \$175 billion

plan Obama proposed during the presidential campaign, aides say. That proposal included spending for roads, bridges and aid to state governments, among other efforts.

Such a spending package would be designed to both create jobs and fuel economic growth.

UMA briefing

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

UMA has focused a great deal of attention on ensuring that the rule continues to be fairly implemented and vigorously enforced by the FTA and not weakened through future regulatory or legislative actions.

"We want the new administration to understand the importance of this rule to UMA operator members, their employees and the communities they serve," said Presley. "Most bus and motorcoach companies are small businesses and small businesses have proved to be the real economic engine in challenging economic times," Presley added.

Additional issues covered during the meeting included occupant

protection and the need for sound, scientific research and findings related to passenger protection systems; the federal fuel tax exemption for over-the-road buses; stronger enforcement of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's new-entrant program, and the overall importance and impact of the bus and motorcoach industry on the travel and tourism economy.

"UMA was founded to represent the charter-and-tour coach owner/operator," noted Parra. "Our meeting with the new administration further emphasizes this mission, and as new leadership is placed in the U.S. Department of Transportation and Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, we look forward to working with them on the key issues facing our industry and nation."

Lessons stem from bridge collapse

WASHINGTON — Members of the National Transportation Safety Board and other federal officials are calling for the nation's bridge inspection process to change following the release of an NTSB report that cited design flaws and inadequate load capacity as contributing to the collapse of the I-35 bridge in Minneapolis in August 2007.

The collapse killed 13 people and injured 145 during the evening rush hour on Aug. 1, 2007.

The NTSB issued its final report on the collapse here last month, declaring that a design flaw during previous modifications, plus the weight and placement of construction equipment, created a perfect storm that led to the collapse of the Interstate 35 span.

"We believe this thorough investigation should put to rest any speculation as to the root cause of this terrible accident and provide a roadmap for improvements to prevent future tragedies," said NTSB Acting Chairman Mark V. Rosenker.

U.S. Rep. James Oberstar, D-

Minn., who chairs the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, said bridge inspectors now will have to expand their work, going back to the design of the bridge itself and reviewing the engineering documents.

"They can no longer assume that the bridge was properly designed," said Oberstar.

NTSB officials said the inadequate design of the bridge's gusset plates, while the responsibility of the designing firm, were not detected by state or federal transportation officials in previous reviews of the 40-year-old I-35W bridge.

Oberstar said there are 740 bridges of similar age and design in the U.S.

Oberstar filed a bill in the U.S. House following the bridge collapse, calling for the federal gov-

ernment to spend \$1 billion and revise the way structurally deficient bridges are prioritized for repair or replacement.

The bill passed the House overwhelmingly but was stalled in the Senate prior to the recent federal election.

Congress and the Obama Administration will have the task of addressing the nation's aging highway and bridge infrastructure as committees, including Oberstar's, set out to write the next large-scale highway and public transportation bill due in Congress next year.

Meantime, U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary Peters directed the Federal Highway Administration to revise its training materials and inspection procedures and to work with the states to improve the design process.

Stretch of I-65 in Indiana reopens

GARY, Ind. — Construction crews are only a few weeks away from reopening a 1.5 mile stretch of Interstate 65 in northwestern Indiana that's been closed since February for reconstruction likely will

reopen by the middle of this month.

A spokesman for the Indiana Department of Transportation says the highway between Interstates 80/94 and the Indiana Toll Road will reopen by mid-December.

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Americans drive less, highway funds decline

WASHINGTON — The federal Highway Trust Fund, the U.S. government's primary source for financing highway, bridge and transit projects, took in \$3 billion less in fiscal 2008, as Americans drove 90 billion fewer miles, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters reported.

The trend underscores the need to find a new way to finance transportation projects in America, she added.

"Our current approach has us encouraging Americans to change their driving habits and burn less fuel while secretly hoping they drive more so we can finance new bridges, repair interstates and expand transit systems," said Peters. "We need a new approach that

complements, instead of contradicts, our energy policies and infrastructure needs."

Peters pointed out that Americans drove 4.4 percent less, or 10.7 billion fewer vehicle miles traveled, in September 2008 than September 2007, the 11th straight month of declining driving.

The trend is most evident in rural interstate travel, which fell by

8 percent that month, while urban interstate travel declined by 3.9 percent.

As a result of the continued decline in roadway travel, the Highway Trust Fund, which is primarily funded through federal fuel tax receipts, collected \$31 billion in revenue between October 2007 and September 2008 — \$3 billion less than it collected the previous year, while federal transportation spending increased by \$2 billion.

Peters noted that, if the trend continues, the Highway Trust Fund may experience another shortfall sooner than expected. For this reason, she again urged Congress to fundamentally change the nation's approach to financing and managing transportation systems.

'If the trend continues, the Highway Trust Fund may experience another shortfall sooner than expected.'

N.C. loses from freeze on fuel tax

RALEIGH, N.C. — Two years ago, the North Carolina legislature put a cap on the state fuel tax.

While drivers currently save about a nickel for each gallon they buy because of the cap, the total loss to the state Transportation Department is much greater: \$600 million.

That's about how much less the department will have taken in cumulatively by the time the cap is scheduled to expire June 30, compared to the amount that would have been collected had there been no cap, according to state estimates.

Department and General Assembly researchers estimate more than half of the money would have been collected this fiscal year, when record gas prices combined

with the state's variable fuel tax formula would have brought in more than \$400 million extra.

The state warned last month that if tax revenue stays at the current level, the department will be forced to cut \$200 million by next summer. Greater shortfalls will prompt even deeper cuts.

Lawmakers returning to Raleigh next month must decide whether to let the cap expire or extend it and find money elsewhere to pay for road construction and repair. There's an estimated \$65 billion gap between transportation revenues and needs in North Carolina through 2030, the Department of Transportation has said.

In the past, North Carolina's fuel has automatically adjusted

twice annually based on the average wholesale price of a gallon. The adjustments, based on a six-month average for fuel, were designed to keep the tax's value from eroding.

The legislature agreed to limit the tax to no more than 29.9 cents per gallon starting in mid-2006 after complaints when it rose by roughly 3 cents because fuel prices had surged in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Gov. Mike Easley initially was cool to it but later signed a budget bill with the cap.

Without the cap, the legislature's Fiscal Research Division says the tax now would have been 34.8 cents per gallon and soared to 41 cents the first of next year.

Iowa University will study mileage-based tax system that could replace fuel tax

IOWA CITY, Iowa — The federal government has awarded a \$16.5-million grant to the University of Iowa to conduct a study in six regions of a mileage-based system to finance highway, bridge and public transit costs.

The regions targeted for the study are San Diego; Austin, Texas; Baltimore; Research Triangle in North Carolina, including Durham, Raleigh and Chapel Hill; Boise, Idaho, and the Iowa counties of Delaware, Dubuque, Linn, Jones, Jackson, Cedar, Clinton, Muscatine and Scott.

Paid study participants will have global positioning systems installed in their vehicles to record miles traveled.

The participants will not pay fuel taxes at the pump, like other vehicles, but will upload their GPS data to a central computer system and be billed according to their mileage traveled.

Tax revenue will then be distributed to regions where the participants traveled.

Driving the study is the notion that the federal Highway Trust Fund that pays for transportation infrastructure receives most of its revenue from per-gallon taxes on gasoline and diesel fuel.

"Over the past 10 years, the motor fuel tax has increasingly failed to generate sufficient funds to repair damaged roads and bridges, fill potholes, and maintain the safe and efficient operation of our highway system," say University of Iowa officials.

Highway user groups and law-

makers have raised privacy concerns about any system that tracks the location and movement of vehicles.

Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-CA, chair of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, said in January that the privacy issue could be the deal breaker for a mileage-based tax.

"There are other ways to figure out how many vehicle miles you're using other than having some Big Brother system tracking your every move," Boxer told members of the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission.

The commission issued recommendations earlier this year calling for the federal government to raise fuel taxes significantly in the short term but phase them out by 2025 in favor of a mileage-based tax.

University of Iowa officials are well aware of the privacy concerns.

"It is likely that acceptability of the new approach will depend to a large extent on perceptions regarding privacy," say university officials, acknowledging that it would be possible that records could be "subpoenaed in criminal or civil cases involving the owner of a vehicle."

"Because the trade-off between privacy protection and auditability is one of the key issues we are addressing in this national evaluation study, we will enable participants to experience each method during the course of the field-testing."

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Motorcoach Council mission has never been more timely

North America's motorcoach industry finds itself at a crossroads of social, political and economic events that will shape its future.

Today's travelers not only base their decisions on economy, safety and convenience but they also must consider road congestion, carbon footprint, receding icebergs and the like.

Traveling by motorcoach would seem like an obvious and smart travel choice and yet, in spite of compelling arguments for choosing the bus as a means of transportation, the industry seems to have lost its voice amidst the din of new car and airline advertisements.

Has bus travel become a relic of the past, struggling to expand in a marketplace set for today's consumers as they arrange their business and personal travel?

Perceptions about the motorcoach industry became crystal clear in a recent ad online at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oeMzLX7OFdo>. Take a moment to view the Febreze Noticeables "bus" ad and see just how badly the industry has been depicted.

The Motorcoach Council's

mission — to promote public awareness, availability, selection, usage and benefits of motorcoach travel — is even more critical and timely to the future of the bus industry.

"We are the underutilized and under-recognized, a hidden treasure in the untapped cache of consumer choices. We offer a community-centric transportation solution to the consumer's plethora of travel choices," said Motorcoach Council Chairman Todd Holland of Ramblin Express.

Council gameplan

Utilizing an aggressive, proactive and coordinated marketing and public relations campaign, along with full support and engagement from operators, suppliers, major manufacturers, national associations and key industry vendors, our industry stands to gain much more than we can currently achieve as individuals.

The council intends to remain a grassroots, nonpolitical and promotional agency designed to enhance the image of the industry across North America as an ad-

'A natural by-product of this effort will be a positive impact on individual operators, allowing them to grow their respective businesses, elevate morale and increase ridership.'

junct to existing associations such as IMG, ABA and UMA. The Motorcoach Council's efforts focus on educating consumers with a targeted campaign to convey the numerous attributes of motorcoach travel.

"The council believes that united with IMG, ABA, UMA and other groups and organizations we can accomplish our goals together, as a unified effort by pooling our industry's combined experience, financial and human resources," said Holland.

The council will unite operators and key stakeholders to not only deliver the most dynamic passenger transportation solutions to

the consumer but also grow the industry as a whole to increase market share for all.

By creating more buses and charter services, standards for the entire industry are elevated. A natural by-product of this effort will be a positive impact on individual operators, allowing them to grow their respective businesses, elevate morale and increase ridership.

Opportunity for operators

Members will be able to piggyback off the national and trade associations' superior reputation for excellence and utilize their valuable, combined networks and influence to elevate awareness and promote companywide participation in a global cause.

Those joining the Motorcoach Council will also receive other benefits, including special insignia and recognition on bus wraps, decals and the council's website, as well as discounted graphics and marketing materials.

Hyperlinks on the council's online directory will drive consumers to individual operator web pages. Members benefit from an in-

creased consumer pull on motorcoach transportation and a more robust market share for all.

The council intends to engage industry stakeholders via its Founding Partners Program, a fundraising mechanism to recognize those companies and associations that have demonstrated the vision and leadership to get involved in this grassroots effort prior to March 15, 2009, an "internal push" to get as many operators and stakeholders involved from the ground up.

The council offers flexible payment plans for the Founding Partner Program and will accept a "letter of commitment" in lieu of an immediate donation if full contributions are received prior to June 30, 2009, so members can join now and pay later.

To become a Founding Partner, or make a one-time donation to the council, visit <http://www.motorcoachcouncil.org/join.asp>. You also can view a list of current members on the "partners" page.

This article was prepared by the Motorcoach Council. For more information go to: www.motorcoachcouncil.org.

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Calendar

JANUARY 2009

8 ABA Marketplace, Charlotte, N.C. Info: Go to www.buses.org.

19-21 IMG Maintenance & Safety Forum, Hilton Grand Vacations Club at SeaWorld International Center, Orlando, Fla. Info: Go to www.imgcoach.com.

19-21 Southeastern Regional Meeting of Motorcoach Operators, Orlando, Fla. Info: Call (434) 376-1150.

21 UMA State Association Summit, Peabody Orlando. Info: Go to www.motorcoachexpo.com, or call (800) 424-8282.

21-25 UMA Motorcoach Expo, Orlando, Fla. Info: Go to www.motorcoachexpo.com.

23-28 National School Transportation Association Midwinter Meeting, Orlando, Fla. Info: www.yellowbuses.org.

FEBRUARY 2009

2-5 Tennessee Motor Coach Association 2009 Convention & Marketplace, Music Road Hotel, Pigeon Forge, Tenn. Info: Go to www.tnmca.net, or call (423) 288-8622.

California complaint

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

gress that the current rule needs to be left intact," Presley adds.

The case could finally be coming to a close, with motorcoach industry executives sitting down this month with officials from Sacramento Regional Transit to make sure future air show charter work goes to the private sector — and not a publicly funded entity.

"This is classic; this was (a case) where they clearly used the taxpayer subsidy to undercut the private operator," says Presley.

In the Sacramento case, the Sacramento Regional Transit District told the FTA it was driving fans to and from the March air show on a "modified" regular route when, in fact, it was performing what one motorcoach industry executive calls "a classic charter service."

The industry only found out because the transit authority had charged \$80,000 in 2007 for the service, and the air show's organizers went to Amador Stage Lines looking for a better deal.

The air show organizers ended up using the transit agency again because it undercut Amador by

\$14,000, charging \$30,000 for the service.

Grabbing the bull

Amador went into action.

With employees riding the air show buses, videotaping the service, collecting a flyer that said the regular route (No. 75) had been cancelled, and finding signs days

'We took pictures, we photographed it, we have one of the key leaflets, which announced the cancellation of the regular route. We have their own evidence, in addition to our own observations.'

before the event announcing a light-rail station's park-and-ride lot would be closed because of the air show.

Also, on the days of the air show, electronic head signs on the buses did not have the route number displayed. Instead, the head signs showed "CA Capital Air Show." At one point, an Amador employee told transit staff he needed to get to a hospital on Route 75; he was told he couldn't take the bus to the hospital.

"Amador, under normal circumstances, would have provided

that service," says Jim Seal, a consultant for the California Bus Association.

"We took pictures, we photographed it, we have one of the key leaflets, which announced the cancellation of the regular route. We have their own evidence, in addition to our own observations," says Seal.

"You had to ride their service.

Everybody who went to the show had to ride those buses. There is nothing unique about this service. There is no reason we (Amador) couldn't have provided the service," says Seal.

Seal wants to see a written agreement with the transit authority that allows the private sector to use a park-and-ride lot while providing service to next year's air show.

A fishy smell

Bill Allen, who owns Amador Stage Lines, found out about the charter service earlier this year be-

fore the air show when the show organizers contacted him. He was told that because the transit authority charged such a high fee in 2007, the air show hadn't made any money and there was concern the show wouldn't be able to continue.

For \$44,000, Allen offered to provide 12 buses throughout the day, with a total of 20 in the afternoon. The authority came back with a price of \$30,000, the air show organizers' goal.

Allen suspected that what the transit agency was doing wasn't legal, so Amador started to document the service. Company employees found that light-rail passengers with air show tickets and passengers on the charter service weren't charged for the transportation. The air show organizers were paying for it.

Allen estimates the transit authority used more than 30 buses for the service to the California Capital Air Show at Mather Airport in Sacramento County.

The bus ride, "was nonstop, closed door until you got to the tarmac, which was obviously not part of the route," says Allen. "We actually have pictures of people standing at a (Route 75) stop waiting and the bus going by."

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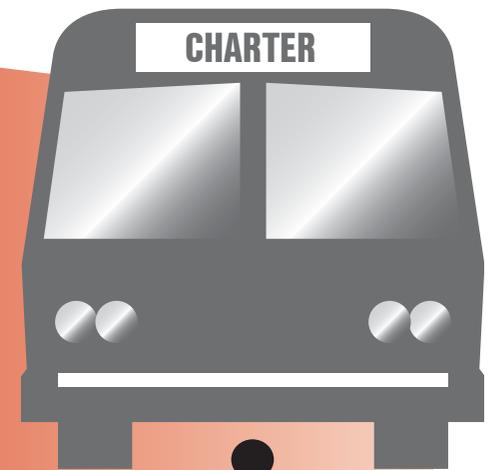
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At year end, a special 'thank you' from an old bus guy

By Dave Millhouser

It was pitch black as the old bus ghosted west on U.S. 24, crossing Colorado's rolling prairie.

A hint of pink in the rearview mirror whispered that dawn was coming, and the driver asked the group leader to wake the 40 teenagers sleeping in the passenger seats.

"They need to see this," said the driver.

A bit of grumbling, then silence.

The sun rising behind the coach flashed a beam that arced 30 miles ahead, across the night sky, and lit the tip of Pikes Peak. The snow cap glittered like a jewel hovering in space, and then the light descended the mountain, making it glow pink and purple.

"Purple Mountain Majesties" ...you bet.

It has been 45 years but the

memory remains crystal clear.

This is what bus people do.

In the midst of financial crises, economic meltdowns and all the things that make this a tough business... we take people to special places and moments.

We're often perceived as a second cousin to more glamorous modes of transportation, but without buses many of the folks who make this country work couldn't get to their jobs.

The young men and women of the military, who protect us, begin their difficult journeys in buses and that's how they come back to us.

The special generation that saw us through WWII and Korea have used our coaches to tour the great nation they defended — and built.

We take them to see a country that, even in the midst of turmoil, remains the most beautiful and generous on earth.

We take folks to friends and

family for holidays and special occasions, to sporting events and shows, and to summer camps and vacations. We rescue hurricane victims.

Without bus service, countless communities would be isolated, unlivable for those unable to drive.

'Motorcoaches and the people who operate them make America a far better place to live.'

We do it even when airplanes are grounded and trains break down — safely and with a minimum of fuss.

It's a rugged business, with hard work, long hours and midnight emergencies. There never seems to be enough time or money.

We all gripe and yet, somehow, we are never able to quit the business. It's a lifetime addiction.

That may be because, deep inside, we know who we are and that what we do is special.

We may not be sophisticated, or sexy, but we do something great every day.

It would be nice if the public recognized it but we do it because it's so damn satisfying. Motorcoaches and the people who operate them make America a far better place to live.

In 1966, I started sweeping buses. Since then, they've taken me to a lot of wonderful places and offered opportunities I could never have imagined as I pushed trash down the aisle of a 1947 Brill.

None of that can compare to all the fine people I've met.

And so, with the holidays approaching, may I thank you all for what you've done for me, for



Dave Millhouser

our industry and for this great country?

It's an honor to be a bus person — to be one of you.

And may I remind you that what you do matters? You make people's lives better in ways that aren't always visible but are very real. You are needed.

We grumble, but in the words of the Buffalo Bill's great football coach, Marv Levy: "Where would you rather be? What would you rather be doing?"

Dave Millhouser is a bus industry marketing consultant and freelance writer. Contact him at: dave_millhouser@hotmail.com.



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Diversification

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

emergencies. And, as an added bonus, it offers replacement coaches and drivers if they're needed.

LeBron said the maintenance shop is being upgraded to a state-of-the-art facility, technicians are undergoing regular training and a new maintenance director — Vic Araujo — has been hired to run the operation. Araujo has been in coach maintenance for 18 years.

"Will it all work out for us? We'll see," says LeBron.

Shift to shuttles

Paradise has diversified in other areas, too, including hooking up with the Long Island Railroad to shuttle commuters between stations when a train breaks down, track is being repaired or other problems develop that stop the trains. It recently ran 38 buses a day between several stations during a major track repair project and 30 during a period rails were being tested.

Additionally, the company added several other shuttles, including regularly scheduled daily runs to nearby casinos and parking lot shuttles to New York Giants and Jets football games.

Escot Bus Lines of Largo, Fla., turned to transit buses to give it an extra edge, adding 11 of them to its fleet of luxury motorcoaches and then contracting for work with Tampa International Airport and a large resort in Orlando.

"It's contract work and it helps take the spike or seasonality out of the charter market," said company vice president Brian Scott. "And, that's a very good thing."

Both contract jobs run seven days a week with the airport shuttle moving airport workers between parking lots and various locations at the airport, and the resort operation transporting visitors to and from Disney World on a regular transit-like schedule.

Scott said the company now markets shuttle services as a part of its regular offerings, emphasizing the experience it has gained while operating the airport and resort shuttles. "It looks good on our resume," he notes.

Small operator opportunities

Diversification isn't just for big companies. Small ones can profit from it, too.

Among those doing just that is Destiny Tours of Alexandria, Va., a five-coach carrier that regularly runs charters to Atlantic City, New

York, Philadelphia, Washington D. C. and many other eastern cities.

Owner Eddie Soto, a full-time Washington D. C. police officer who drives police escorts for the president, vice president and visit-

coaches.

Soto said he could add more buses to his own fleet — he just bought a new Van Hool C2045E coach — but he doesn't care to take the chance that some coaches

'Diversification isn't just for big companies.

Small ones can profit from it, too.'

ing dignitaries, said he's keenly aware that motorcoach operators can't make money if their coaches are sitting idle.

"And I just don't like to sit around and wait for charter work," he said.

To avoid such a problem, he's partnered with DC2NY, a recent entry into the busy Washington D.C.-to-New York City line-run service. Soto provides and manages the coaches and drivers for the seven-day operation, while DC2NY handles the marketing, ticket sales and other business matters.

Because the service runs multiple trips on weekends and Soto doesn't have enough coaches to fill the need, he's linked up with a second company, Access Limousine Services of Alexandria, Va., that provides the additional

might be sitting during the slow season. By teaming up with other companies, he said, he can still grow his business without taking on additional debt.

Charter rule helps, too

Although many companies may not yet be trying out new ventures, some are diversifying to an extent by taking advantage of business opportunities the new federal charter rule has given them.

Since the rule went into effect in April, carriers of all sizes and from all areas of the country have been picking up a mixture of charter and shuttle work that public transit agencies routinely handled in the past. They've worked parking lot shuttles for special events, weddings, business meetings, school trips, church charters and many others.

Typical among them is Miller Transportation in Louisville, Ky., which shared some major work with transit agencies this summer that was generated by the Kentucky Derby, Indianapolis 500 and three other major races.

Next year, according to company president John Miller, public transit will be out of all of the parking lot and group shuttles for the races and he expects to be in the running to take over much of them.

Strength in numbers

Just about everyone can get involved in the new charter business — even if they don't have enough coaches to handle a particular job, according to Steve Klika, president of International Motor Coach Group Inc.

He has been advocating for some time that instead of passing up a job because it is too large to do alone, operators should work with each other by pooling their equipment and drivers so the job can be done by private operators and not revert back to public transit agencies.

It is good work, he and others stress, and it can give charter operators a big boost when their regular business slows down.

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How one small college copes with transportation costs

MIDDLETOWN, Conn. — During the past three years, transportation costs at the athletic department of Wesleyan University here have increased at or near double-digit rates.

An 8 percent rise in fiscal 2006 was followed by a 13 percent jump last year and a 12 percent increase this year.

Athletic Business Manager Tom Wantuck estimates transportation costs have increased by a total of 168 percent during his 10 years at the 177-year-old, Methodist-affiliated school.

The mounting transportation costs have had a significant impact on the university of 3,300 students, but the situation certainly is not unique to Wantuck and Wesleyan.

Universities across North America that routinely send their students hundreds of miles to participate in athletic events are spending ever increasing amounts on the transportation to get them there.

And most, if not all, are like Wesleyan, looking for ways to economize and that could mean challenges for bus operators that aren't considerate of the plight of

their college and university customers.

Good service, communications and flexibility can go a long way toward helping ameliorate the strain.

Trying to get control

Wantuck said he typically agrees on fuel rates with the bus companies he uses at the time he makes transportation reservations. However, he noted that some companies are now adding fuel surcharges onto their rates.

"At the time we make the reservations, we lock in the rate," he explained. "This year, they've done something different. I got a quote that said, 'This is subject to surcharges if diesel fuel goes over \$5 a gallon.'

"They've never done that before, so you can see what's happening. They're trying to cover themselves."

Making travel arrangements for teams that qualify for season-end championships is particularly difficult for universities, given the high number of potential destinations. Often, the team does not know where it will play its first-

round game until the final day of the regular season, complicating long-term travel reservations.

'Smaller teams... can be placed on a midsize bus rather than a motorcoach for midweek games.'

It is particularly difficult for managers like Wantuck to attempt to predict which teams will qualify for a championship when setting yearly budgets.

"First of all, budgeting is difficult because you don't know how many (of your) teams you're going to get in," he said. "So we have a set amount that we have set aside for postseason play and we just hope it's enough."

Spreading the business

Wesleyan uses three different motorcoach companies—one based in Massachusetts and two in Connecticut for its travel. The university previously also used a Hartford, Conn.-based limousine company

but opted to stop using that operator because of service problems.

Wantuck said he generally bases his decision on which of the three bus companies to use on cost and availability of coaches.

He gets quotes from all three companies. One of the three typically is a little higher than the other two but it generally also provides great service and has the most buses. "So, if I get in a bind, that's the company I need to go to.... That's especially important at tournament time."

The operator Wantuck is using the most this year usually has the best price and also provides good service—a winning combination.

Smaller buses a winner

Wantuck also appreciates the advent of 36-passenger midsize buses, which are less expensive than 55-passenger motorcoaches, saying the smaller buses have helped ease some of the pressure on his budget.

Smaller teams such as men's and women's soccer and field hockey can now be placed on a midsize bus rather than a motor-

coach for midweek games.

At the same time, however, all three teams can travel on one motorcoach to the same location on weekends once league play begins.

Some teams, such as softball (14 players in 2008) and golf (12 players on the roster) take university-owned vans to destinations within 90 minutes.

"We were using a lot of vans when I first started here," he said, but "[about] six years ago, we made a push to reduce vans because of the safety issues.... Now our criteria is if it's within an hour and a half and the team's small enough, we're going to take vans. Anything over an hour and a half, you're on a bus unless it's such a small team that it doesn't make any sense."

Ultimately, despite the financial pressure, Wantuck says his department is resisting changing its policies regarding transportation, lodging, meals or any other factor that could affect a team's performance.

"We don't want to create a competitive disadvantage versus other teams in the conference by doing stuff like that," he says.

The advertisement displays several bus seat configurations on a light-colored, textured background. The seats are arranged in different layouts, some with footrests and armrests. Text labels identify the configurations: '2+1' (two seats with a central aisle), 'BRASIL' (two seats side-by-side), 'TORINO STANDARD' (two seats side-by-side), 'TORINO VIP' (two seats side-by-side with a central aisle), 'PATRIOT' (two seats side-by-side with a central aisle), and 'FEATURES' (two seats side-by-side with a central aisle). At the bottom of the advertisement, the text reads 'THE BEST OPTION FOR YOU.'

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'Delay 2010 rules'

Truckers request is opposed by engine makers

GRAIN VALLEY, Mo. — A major trucking industry association and truck builder want federal officials to delay implementation of the 2010 federal emissions standards for diesel engines, but the association representing engine manufacturers has thrown cold water on the idea.

The Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association and Navistar have asked Congress and the Bush Administration to take action in response to new research that forecasts a dramatic drop in new truck and engine purchases in 2010, which will ultimately lead to a breakdown in the trucking industry.

NERA Economic Consulting of Washington conducted a study that details the implications of the 2010 emission requirements for diesel engines, indicating truckers and fleet managers will decide either to delay purchases or not buy new engines and trucks for financial reasons and user uncertainty. This will eventually mean job losses.

"With record-high diesel fuel prices earlier this year, trucking companies have already faced near-

ly insurmountable challenges trying to stay in business," said Todd Spencer, executive vice president of the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association, which is based in Grain Valley.

"It's the worst possible time for the trucking industry to take on a high stakes gamble with no known level of reliability of the technologies or return on investment."

However, moving the goal post now is not necessary and unfair to those who have invested heavily and worked diligently to meet the clean air goals set out by the USEPA, says the Engine Manufacturers Association and executives with Volvo Trucks North America.

"Engine manufacturers have invested heavily in engineering technological solutions and design changes to meet the new NOx emission standard that is required for 2010-model-year engines and see no technological barriers to meeting the standard," said the association.

"Volvo Trucks sees no reason to change the current timetable for U.S. 2010," added Per Carlsson,

president and CEO of Volvo Trucks North America.

"We're prepared to meet these regulations as they stand today without the use of emissions credits. Extensive testing in North America and widespread experience elsewhere confirms that SCR is the optimal solution, providing significant fuel economy improvements and cleaner air," said Carlsson.

A sister company to Volvo Trucks produces Volvo engines for Prevost motorcoaches.

Carlsson said that more than half a million trucks use SCR every day in Europe. "In North America, Volvo Trucks has over 1.5 million miles of customer testing so far, with excellent results and operational experience."

The Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association would like Congress and the administration to restructure the timeline for 2010 emissions rules, phasing in the new standards to allow "ample breathing room and build confidence within the trucking industry, providing time to prove the worthiness of new engines, give the economy

TA, Petro stations ready for distribution of urea

WESTLAKE, Ohio — Travel-Centers of America, one of the nation's largest truck stop operators, says it will have urea, now called diesel exhaust fluid, readily available at its TA- and Petro-branded truck stops next year for use in most 2010 diesel engines.

Small amounts of diesel exhaust fluid (urea) will be needed for engines using selective catalytic reduction, or SCR, to meet 2010 on-highway emissions regulations.

"TA has been working with various business partners on (diesel exhaust fluid) issues since 2003, long before SCR became the reality in the U.S. that it is today," said Tom Komos, TA's vice president of fuel supply.

"SCR technology using (diesel exhaust fluid) has been embraced by nearly every major engine manufacturer. Our work with these

OEMs, as well as our fleet customers, urea producers and dispensing/delivery systems manufacturers, has intensified.

"TA has been and will remain committed to help ensure this greener, cleaner method of diesel engine operation is fully supported at 100 percent of our locations to coincide with the introduction of SCR-equipped (vehicles) for the 2010-model year," said Komos.

Like other truck stop operators, TA plans to offer various delivery methods, including on-island bulk dispensers, as well as top-off quantities available in bulk and in pre-packaged containers.

Last month, *Bus & Motorcoach News* reported that Pilot Travel Centers, with more than 325 owned or licensed locations in 40 states, also will have urea available at the pump late next year.

an opportunity to recover and explore new fuel alternatives."

"With more time, the solutions will become much clearer and environmentally much cleaner," said the association's Spence. "Otherwise, there will be a delay in the intended

environmental benefit because there is a disincentive to purchasing the new technology. Truckers and fleets are simply going to hold onto their equipment for a longer period of time, if they are able to hold onto it at all."

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Navistar to use credits to meet emissions standards

WARRENVILLE, Ill. — As expected, Navistar International Corp. has confirmed it will use federal emission credits to enable its new on-highway diesel engine to meet 2010 federal emission standards.

However, a Navistar executive says the engine could be set up to comply with the regulation without the credits.

Navistar's proprietary big-bore engine will use exhaust gas recirculation to meet the drastically reduced nitrogen oxides emissions levels mandated for 2010, rather than the selective catalytic reduction system employed by all other diesel engine makers.

IC Bus, a subsidiary of Navistar, announced in October it plans to enter the motorcoach market with a new coach in 2010. It will be powered by International's new MaxxForce 13 engine. (See Nov. 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Timothy Shick, director of marketing for Navistar's engine group, told a leading trucking publication that using emission credits will enable the company to run higher NOx levels for about two years and use the time to "fine-tune" its EGR

system.

Other engine manufacturers, including Cummins Inc. — which is expected to become a leading supplier of engines to the motorcoach industry — have said they will rely on SCR technology for 2010 because it offers greater fuel efficiency.

Shick insists, however, that the cost of the urea solution that SCR requires would offset the fuel-economy gains.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency rules allow a manufacturer to save "credits" during years when its engines exceed existing emission standards and apply them to years when its engines don't meet the required levels. These are the credits Navistar apparently will use in 2010 and 2011.

"It is correct that Navistar will not limit NOx emissions to the federally mandated limit of 0.2 grams per brake horsepower hour, as of January 2010," said Shick. "We can meet 0.2 right now and with good performance if we wanted to. All of our volume engines today are operating at lower than '07 engine requirements. That is how we're earning the credits."

Shick said Navistar planned to use the credits, probably over two

'Navistar plans to use the credits to calibrate its engine while it learns more about the engine's operation to achieve optimum fuel efficiency and performance while meeting the NOx mandate.'

years, to "calibrate" its engine while it learns more about the engine's operation to achieve optimum fuel efficiency and performance while meeting the NOx mandate.

He also said Navistar's program will emit less pollution overall because EPA permits companies to use the credits only at a discounted level, which he estimated to be between 60 and 70 percent in 2010 for each credit earned earlier.

"Navistar has been building EGR engines since 2004," Shick said. "Our EGR engines on the road

now have lower overall emissions than federal 2007 regulations call for and have lower emissions, including NOx, than the new MAN big-bore engine with EGR introduced this year."

Navistar is producing a big-bore, on-highway engine by adding its own electronics, fuel-induction and exhaust systems to a basic engine from German manufacturer MAN.

Shick said Navistar would use EGR in 2010 to avoid upkeep and maintenance problems in 2010. He said Navistar's "enhanced" EGR system would meet 2010 NOx levels without new components for 2010.

The Clean Air Act requires diesel engines to drastically cut both NOx and particulate matter, or soot.

EPA's 2007 emissions rule cut soot standards, forcing engine makers to install diesel particulate filters, which cost several thousand dollars and require regular maintenance.

EPA's 2010 standards cut allowable NOx emissions to nearly negligible levels.

SCR uses a converter in the ex-

haust system that takes out NOx, but it requires injection of a chemical catalyst: a pure form of urea and water that is being called diesel exhaust fluid.

"Our 2010 engines will be fuel neutral to where we are today," Shick said. "The SCR people will argue that they will be able to use less fuel, and we don't dispute that. We have tested SCR for some time, but we have seen a one-for-one trade-off in the amount of fuel saved versus the amount of urea used to reduce NOx."

Chuck Blake, technical sales support manager of Detroit Diesel Corp., whose 2010 engines — produced for Daimler's Freightliner and Western Star trucks and Setra motorcoaches — will use SCR, disputed Shick's statements about urea costs.

"Overall, SCR engines will use 5 percent less diesel than EGR, offset by a 2 percent takeaway from urea, but urea will cost two-thirds less," Blake said.

Shick contends that the distribution system for urea "is not currently mature and urea is extremely expensive in North America today."



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Detroit Diesel tests SCR engines

DETROIT — Detroit Diesel has announced that it has surpassed seven million miles of testing on its BlueTec selective catalytic reduction technology that will be used in 2010 engines.

Daimler's BlueTec selective catalytic reduction was selected by Detroit Diesel in 2005 to meet the upcoming stringent U.S. emissions standards for heavy-duty buses and trucks.

"We started our engineering development and validation activities several years ago to optimize BlueTec SCR for the 2010 North American market," said David Siler, director of marketing for Detroit Diesel.

"We are excited about how suc-

cessful we've been in our validation program and we feel our customers will benefit from this positive experience."

BlueTec selective catalytic reduction will be used on Detroit Diesel's recently introduced DD15 and DD13 engines, and will incorporate the ACRS common rail fuel system, a diesel particulate filter already in use today, as well as a new selective catalytic reduction NOx after-treatment system that utilizes diesel exhaust fluid, commonly known as urea.

The DD13 will be the standard engine in 2010-model Setra motorcoaches.

Detroit Diesel said its extensive validation testing isn't complete. Its

reliability test vehicle fleet is being expanded and will continue to log millions of miles prior to production launch in January 2010.

Detroit Diesel also has conducted several rounds of vehicle validation testing under extreme operating and environmental conditions that may be experienced by the end-user, such as below-zero winter conditions in northern climates, as well as temperatures above 120 degrees in the desert regions of Arizona, Nevada and California.

Since adopting the technology in early 2005, Daimler has delivered more than 200,000 buses and trucks around the world utilizing BlueTec selective catalytic reduction.

Detroit upgrades website, engines

DETROIT — Detroit Diesel Corp. has revamped its website, making it easier to find company products, services and dealers.

The retooled site features comprehensive information about Detroit Diesel engines; provides details about 2010 emissions regulations, including an explanation of Detroit Diesel's 2010 solution — BlueTec selective catalytic reduc-

tion technology.

A feature of the site is a locator, with a live database, that enables users to search Detroit Diesel's network for new engine sales, parts and service support.

Users also can determine availability and location of parts and maintenance products.

Meanwhile, Detroit Diesel has announced a software release —

available free to customers — that will boost the fuel economy of its 2007 engines by up to 2.5 percent.

Coach operators can schedule a visit to any Detroit Diesel dealer or distributor to have their 2007 Series 60 engines "re-flashed" to upgrade engine performance at no cost.

Series 60 engines — produced after July 1 of this year — are programmed for the modified cycle.

Inland Power will service Setra coaches in Midwest

GREENSBORO, N.C. — Daimler Buses North America has announced a strategic service partnership with Inland Power Group, formerly Inland Detroit Diesel-Allison.

Inland Power, which has locations in metro Chicago, Wisconsin and Indiana, becomes Daimler Buses' flagship service center in the Midwest.

"Inland Power Group has a long history and a superb reputation for motorcoach service throughout the Midwest," said Pat Scully, chief commercial officer for Daimler Buses North America. "We are very excited about our new partnership with Inland Power Group as its locations and service will help in supporting and growing our motorcoach base in the Midwest."

Scully said Inland Power Group technicians have undergone factory training, including both basic and advanced training for all Setra coaches. Inland Power technicians will continue to receive factory training and ongoing quality reviews, to ensure that the highest

levels of service are maintained.

Inland Power Group will provide Setra customers with all minor and major repair work, including full-service warranty repairs for all Setra coaches, as well as Detroit Diesel engine and Allison transmission service.

Inland Power Group also will perform chassis, suspension and electrical repairs along with planned preventative maintenance for all makes of buses and motorcoaches.

"Each of our locations is truly a one-stop source," said Greg Cole, president and CEO of Inland Power Group.

Inland moves to new facility

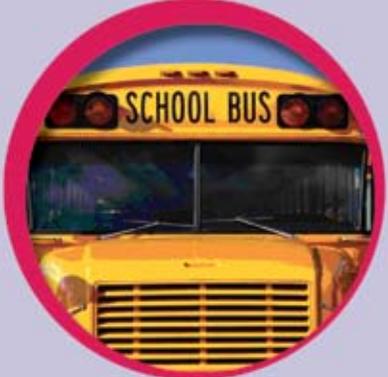
Inland Power Group of Rockford, Ill., is relocating its Rockford operations to a larger facility.

The new facility, at 3736 11th St. in Rockford, has 14 service bays and roughly 23,000 square feet under roof, handling up to three times the customer volume of the old facility. The parts inventory area will double, providing faster repairs for Inland customers.



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Strict guidelines urged for handling, use of urea

GAITHERSBURG, Md. — When heavy-duty engines with selective catalytic reduction technology start rolling in 2010, bus and truck operators refilling their vehicles' urea tanks will need to follow strict guidelines to protect the product's purity to avoid damaging the after-treatment systems, say urea experts.

Selective catalytic reduction, which most new buses and trucks built after January 2010 will use to meet federal nitrogen oxide emission standards, will require the vehicles to have new tanks holding about 30 gallons of urea, also called diesel exhaust fluid.

"DEF is not a conventional urea solution," said John Lounsbury, marketing director of chemical producer Terra Environmental Technologies, which makes diesel emission fluid under the brand name TerraCair.

"Both the specific purity of the product and the concentration of product are essential to the function of (selective catalytic reduction)," Lounsbury explains.

"All along the line of distribution, storage and sale, all of the handlers will have to be trained in order to preserve this protocol."

Lounsbury is a member of the SCR Stakeholders Group, an organization that meets monthly with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency officials.

"All the members of the stakeholders group reached a consensus on a very specific grade of urea for SCR," said Vijay Srinivasan, an official with a company that has designed storage and dispersing systems for DEF.

"We want to differentiate DEF from agricultural and industrial-grade urea, because it needs to meet very stringent specifications. ... Off-grade urea or contaminated urea has the potential to kill or poison the catalytic converter," says Srinivasan.

It was the SCR group that decided the SCR catalytic agent will be designated "diesel exhaust fluid," a combination of high purity urea and deionized water. The group decided on the term partly to make sure commercial vehicle operators understand that it is a special product.

Lounsbury said TerraCair uses natural gas as the raw material and processes it to produce ammonia, which is mixed with carbon dioxide to make urea.

That pure form of urea is mixed at a ratio of 32.5 percent with the remaining 67.5 percent being "ultrapure" water that has all minerals removed, he said.

DEF can be stored only in

stainless steel or in specific high-density plastic containers. It also freezes below 12 degrees F. or deteriorates above 86 degrees.

Efforts are being made to convince the USEPA about not requiring that commercial vehicles be

built to gradually shut down the entire powertrain if they run out of diesel exhaust fluid.

"Under EPA rules, the (vehicle) eventually will have to stop running without SCR because it will be polluting," said one expert.

"It'll be done by steps, starting with a low-volume warning, then with more violent warnings, then slowing to a crawl, and eventually, the vehicles are supposed to stop operating, once the DEF tanks are empty."

Trucking industry officials are concerned about what could happen if the shutdown occurred while a truck was crossing a desert or a mountain range.

Or, worse, if it were a bus full of people.



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Seatbelts

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

safe means of transportation to school," said Smith.

According to Smith, the federal government has not, as yet, helped to finance the cost of school buses, like it does public transit buses. "There is money available for alternative fuel-powered school buses, but it is tied to tax rebates which do not apply to nonprofit institutions, such as school systems," Smith said.

He estimates the entry-level incremental cost of a high-back, 39-

inch, three-passenger seat meeting the new requirement at roughly \$660 per seat.

Flexible seats

Ken Hedgecock, vice president of sales, marketing and service for Thomas Built Buses, said his company became the first school bus manufacturer to offer the SafeGuard FlexSeat, which allows buses to carry three belted elementary school children or two belted high school children in a standard bus seat.

The FlexSeat offers school districts the ability to add the safety of lap-and-shoulder belts without reducing bus capacity or altering bus routes, while preserving the standard of compartmentalization on Thomas Built's Type A, C and D buses, Hedgecock said.

Hedgecock noted that California already has three-point, lap-and-shoulder seatbelt requirements and Texas will follow suit in 2010.

"States that do not currently mandate seatbelts can expect to pay approximately \$800 to \$900 per seat more for a standard 39-

inch wide, three-passenger lap-and-shoulder seatbelt seat than a non-belted seat of the same size," Hedgecock said.

"Some states already mandate 24-inch high back seats as well, and for those that do not, the increased price over the current standard of 20-inch seat backs would be approximately \$30 to \$35 per seat."

States will be allowed to use NHTSA highway safety grant funds for the purchase and installation of seatbelts on school buses under the Section 402 program. However, those 402 funds may not be used to purchase a school bus, but may fund only the portion of the cost directly related to the purchase and installation of seatbelts, Hedgecock said.

Hedgecock said Thomas Built Buses already supplies vehicles with the mandated requirements to customers requesting those specifications.

Federal \$\$\$ for buses?

Hillman said IC Corporation, as a founding member of the Amer-

ican School Bus Council, has been a vocal advocate of the need for federal funding for school buses.

The new ruling allows for flexible seating, said James Johnson, sales director for SafeGuard, a division of IMMI. He said SafeGuard, which sells high-back seats with lap-and-shoulder belts to all North American school bus manufacturers, pioneered flexible seating in 2007.

Flexible seating technology maximizes capacity by allowing three small children or two larger children to fit in the same seat.

The rule specifies that one lap-shoulder belt may be installed for every 13 inches of seat bench width, provided that these school bus seats equipped with three lap-shoulder belts also are able to be configured to transport two students, Johnson said.

Johnson applauded NHTSA for its thorough analysis and measured approach to the final rulemaking. "NHTSA's final rule certainly will improve the crash-worthiness of school buses and make school travel safer for all of our children,"

Johnson said. "The mandate of lap-shoulder belts for school buses under 10,000 pounds, along with higher back seats for all school buses, are certainly changes that will net positive results for student transportation safety."

Johnson said flexible seating "eliminates the capacity concerns related to the previous generation of school bus seats equipped with lap-and-shoulder belts."

As a result, an increasing number of school districts, in states like Virginia, Texas, Indiana and Illinois, are voluntarily installing lap-shoulder belts on all school buses in their fleets, not just small buses, he said. These seats, which SafeGuard began manufacturing in 2002, are protecting more than 200,000 children in 40 states, Johnson said. The company worked with NHTSA to share information that led to the final rule on belts and seat backs, he said.

The final price of the new seats will be dictated by school bus dealers, but Johnson estimated their cost per bus will range from \$15,000 to \$20,000.

— Legal Notice —

In the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania

RE: Chapter 11

BBW ENTERPRISES, INC.,

Case No. 1-08-02576-MDF

CAPITAL BUS COMPANY

Case No. 1-08-02577-MDF

ROHRER TOUR & CHARTER COMPANY INC.

Case No. 1-08-02578-MDF

DAUPHOCOR, INC.

Case No. 1-08-02579-MDF

B.B. AND W. ASSOCIATES,

Case No. 1-08-02580-MDF

Debtors (Jointly Administered)

Notice to Interested Parties and Creditors

Proposed Sale of Business Assets Free and Clear of Claims and Liens

Please take notice that BBW Enterprises, Inc., Capitol Bus Company, Rohrer Tour & Charter Company, Inc., Dauphcor, Inc., and B.B. and W. Associates (collectively, the "Debtors") hereby give notice of the Bankruptcy Court hearing on a motion seeking authorization to sell substantially all of debtors' property free and clear of liens, claims, encumbrances, and other interests, and for the assumption and assignment of certain executory contracts.

Included within the proposed sale are those certain improved premises located at and known as 1030-1056 South Cameron St. and 1059-1061 South Cameron St., Harrisburg, Dauphin County, Pa.

The initial purchase price bid for the assets is \$2.3 million in cash, and subject to higher or better offers made in compliance with certain bid procedures approved by the Court. All liens, claims, encumbrances and other interests will attach to sale proceeds at closing.

Bids and objections to the sale must be delivered to debtors' counsel (as set forth below) no later than Dec. 16, 2008. More information regarding the assets to be sold, bidding procedures, the sale in general, and objection procedures may be obtained from the case docket at the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania, (jointly administered in Case No. 1-08-02576-MDF), or by contacting debtors' bankruptcy counsel.

The hearing on the sale motion is set for 9:30 a.m. E.S.T. on Dec. 22, 2008, in the Bankruptcy Courtroom, Third Floor, Federal Building, Third and Walnut streets, Harrisburg, Pa.

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California bus operator/consultant, Don Boyles, dies

SANTA ANA, Calif. – Donald W. Boyles, a bus operator who built one of the nation's largest airport shuttle services, died here last month. He was 84.

After a 10-year career with Continental and Trans World airlines, Mr. Boyles and his wife Candy launched the first bus service to provide direct links between Los Angeles International Airport and Disneyland/Anaheim, Santa Ana and Buena Park, Calif. That was in 1957.

The company, known as Airport Service, eventually grew to link most of the airports in the Los Angeles-Orange County area with communities throughout Southern California. Airport Service mushroomed during the decade following its founding and became instrumental in developing the tourism and convention industry in Southern California.

A subsidiary sightseeing company, Orange Coast Sightseeing, was launched in 1965.

In 1970, the Boyles' companies were merged into Chromalloy American Corp. of St. Louis, a large conglomerate whose holdings included the old American

Transit Corp.

In 1987, Mr. Boyles retired and became a consultant for a variety of companies. He consulted for several years for Transportation Insurance Brokers, and later for Coach USA from 1995-99.

During his career, Mr. Boyles was active in promoting Southern

California tourism. He served on the board of the Anaheim/Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau, becoming chairman in 1968. He also was a former chairman of American Sightseeing International and the Mission Country Visitors & Convention Bureau.

He also served as chairman of

the Airport Ground Transportation Association and the California Bus Association, where he was a long-time board member and convention committee chairman.

Mr. Boyles was a veteran of World War II, serving in the U.S. Navy. During his retirement years, he and his wife were avid world

travelers and golfers.

His wife survives him, along with his two sons, Denis and David, and daughter Kathy Murdock.

A memorial in Mr. Boyles name has been established with the American Cancer Society. Go to www.cancer.org and follow the donation links and prompts.

Commercial vehicles is ArvinMeritor aim

TROY, Mich. — ArvinMeritor, a major supplier to the bus and motorcoach industry, has launched a series of cost-cutting initiatives and a restructuring that includes spinning off or possibly selling its light vehicle systems business group.

"Swift and decisive actions are necessary in response to today's global economic conditions, which include softness in all markets in which we participate, as well as weaker foreign currencies," said Chip McClure, chairman, CEO and president of ArvinMeritor. The company has:

- Accelerated restructuring actions, including workforce and discretionary cost reductions, to achieve an expected \$125 million in annualized savings next year and reducing its global workforce by 1,250 employees, or approximately 7 percent.

- Moved forward to separate the light and commercial vehicle businesses.

- Renewed significant factoring and securitization lines with key banks.

- Repositioned cash for maximum flexibility.

The latest cost cutting actions are in addition to ones the company executed during the past four years.



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