

Happy New Year! Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

January 1, 2018

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

Limo companies expanding their fleets with motorcoaches



Reston Limousine bought its first motorcoach in 2005 when it won a contract for a weekly 50-passenger trip. It now has 250 vehicles — about 25 sedans, six SUVs, minibuses, vans and motorcoaches like this one at the Lincoln Memorial.

A growing number of limousine and livery companies are experiencing increased demand for larger vehicles, prompting many of them to add motorcoaches to their fleets of limos, vans and minibuses.

Limo industry officials predict that the trend will accelerate as ridesharing companies such as Uber and Lyft drain their pool of passengers.

They say that because their companies already are established, they have the experience, resources and customer base to expand into the motorcoach industry.

That, in turn, is helping fill a

void in the charter and tour bus industry caused by barriers start-up companies face in entering the industry.

“There is a large demand for transportation but there are not that many new motorcoach entries opening up,” said Tom Holden, general manager and director of operations at Rose Chauffeured Transportation in Pineville, N.C.

With new motorcoaches costing half a million dollars and countless regulatory hoops facing a startup, it will become increasingly difficult for a motorcoach carrier to arise from scratch,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 ►

Motorcoach operators need to be on alert for cybercrimes

EAST GRAND FORKS, Minn. — The FedEx truck stops at the Triangle Coach Service shop almost daily, so the shop foreman didn't give a second thought to an email notice of a missed delivery.

The single second it took to open the email resulted in a wasted afternoon and \$500 worth of cryptocurrency flushed into cyberspace.

The Triangle shop maintains

10 motorcoaches.

“My shop foreman didn't think anything of the email because we get FedEx and UPS (United Parcel Service) here just about every day,” said Triangle's owner, Dale Helms. “So he clicked on the site and it locked up the computer immediately. It was one of those ransom deals. They sent an email a little bit later and said they wanted

\$500 in bitcoins.

“I would have liked to have told them to stuff it, but the guy we got the bitcoins from said, ‘No, no. You don't want to do that yet.’” Helms said.

David Cooper, highway industry engagement manager in the Transportation Security Administration of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, said cyber-

crime is a daily occurrence.

“It is happening not just in transportation, obviously, but in all sectors and industries,” Cooper said. “We don't have any good data because a lot of it goes unreported.”

The daily flow of transportation cybercrime is motivated not in the pursuit of terrorism but almost always of capitalism. About

288,000 cybercrimes were reported in the U.S. last year, the Federal Bureau of Investigation reported in its annual report from its Internet Crime Complaint Center. Those victims lost an estimated \$1.3 billion.

Ransomware, the name for the type of attack aimed at Triangle Coach, was reported 2,673 times

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Maine operators launch campaign opposing transit deal

PORTLAND, Maine — Four Portland-area motorcoach operators have launched a campaign challenging a contract between the University of Southern Maine and a local transit agency that they say undercuts private businesses and wastes taxpayer money.

The operators, all United Motorcoach Association members, contend that the agreement between the university and the Greater Portland Transit District (Metro) to shuttle students to the school's Gorham campus requires “taxpayers to spend several million dollars

on new buses and operational costs.”

The operators — VIP Tour & Charter Bus Co., Northeast Charter & Tour Co., Cyr Bus Line and Custom Coach and Limousine — held a press conference recently to unveil Taxpayers for Wise Transit Spending, a campaign to pressure the university to cancel its contract with Metro and consider student shuttle bids from private companies.

“We are not against public transit at all, but it needs to be practical,” Gregg Isherwood,

owner of Custom Coach and Limousine, said at the news conference.

The company has a six-year contract with the university to provide shuttle service, but it ends next year. Bus companies were never asked if they could provide service similar to Metro's, Isherwood said.

“We fail to see how the public is benefiting from this,” he said.

Start-up costs for the new service have been estimated at \$4.5 million, including the purchase of eight new buses, with 80 percent

of it funded by the Federal Transit Administration.

The operators said private bus companies that pay local and state taxes could provide more efficient transportation less expensively, but they wind up losers in this situation.

Isherwood, who has 65 employees, said his company has about 40 buses and pays more than \$80,000 in taxes that include excise taxes on buses. He said he wants to work with the university and Gorham, and he could open his service to the public “for mil-

lions less.”

In a joint statement, Metro and the university said the new transit line offers public transportation opportunities that the private sector cannot.

“We should not compare what a private charter company can provide to individual organizations with what a regional transportation system can provide to a growing metropolitan area,” the statement said.

The university will continue to pay private coach companies to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10 ►



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Older licensed drivers are the fastest-growing group

WASHINGTON — The U.S. had a record 221.7 million licensed drivers in 2016, and the fastest-growing group of drivers included people 65 and older, according to data published by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

Almost one in five drivers — 41.7 million — were at least 65 years old, and the largest single-year percentage increase in licensed drivers was among those who are between 75 and 79 years old, increasing by 4.98 percent over the previous year.

The data collected from all 50

states and Washington, D.C., also showed that licensed drivers aged 85 or older increased by 161,182 people — or 4.62 percent — since the previous year, making it the nation's second-fastest-growing demographic group in 2016.

The study said that every state but five — Michigan, Oklahoma, South Dakota, West Virginia and Wyoming — saw increases among licensed drivers in 2016 compared with 2015.

The new data show 57 million drivers between the ages of 20 and 34 — generally known as Millen-

nials — which accounted for nearly one in four U.S. drivers last year, increasing slightly from the 56.1 million reported in 2015.

Teen drivers continued to increase slightly for the third year in a row, rising to 8.8 million — the highest level since 2013 — but remained at among the lowest levels since the federal government began compiling driver's license data in 1963.

In 2016, America's 112.1 million licensed women drivers outnumbered their male counterparts by 2.5 million.

FHWA researchers have pioneered numerous safety enhancements — such as cutting-edge retroreflective laminates that make highway signs brighter and more visible from greater distances — to address the needs of older drivers, which range from declining vision to decreased flexibility and psychomotor performance, and changes in perceptual and cognitive performance.

In addition, the agency provides funding support to the Roadway Safety Foundation to operate the "Clearinghouse for Older Road

User Safety," which offers information for practitioners and for senior drivers as well.

Additional information about how the FHWA designs roads for older drivers can be found in "Handbook for Designing Roadways for the Aging Population," available online at http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/older_users/handbook.

The handbook offers substantial information on the methods and techniques used to accommodate this growing driver demographic.

New Flyer acquires cutaway bus manufacturer ARBOC

ST. CLOUD, Minn. — Transit Holdings, Inc., a U.S. subsidiary of New Flyer Industries Inc., (NFI Group) has acquired ARBOC Specialty Vehicles, LLC, for \$95 million.

ARBOC manufactures low-floor body-on-chassis, or cutaway, buses.

NFI Group said it is using available cash and its existing credit facilities to finance the transaction. The acquisition represents a continuation of the com-

pany's growth and diversification strategy and was not subject to any pre-closing regulatory or antitrust requirements.

NFI Group also is the parent company of motorcoach manufacturer MCI.

Established in 2008, Middlebury, Ind.-based ARBOC manufactures buses ranging from 21 to 35 feet in length that operate in transit, paratransit and shuttle applications. ARBOC buses exceed U.S. federal fuel economy stan-

dards and Buy America requirements, and undergo safety testing beyond industry norms.

The North American cutaway bus market has an estimated annual volume of between 16,000 and 18,000 units, which is more than three times the current estimated size of the heavy-duty transit bus market and more than six times the current estimated motorcoach market, based on annual units produced.

Today, the installed base of cut-

away buses is predominantly high-floor in configuration, with low-floor buses comprising less than 5 percent of the total cutaway market. ARBOC is the leader in the low-floor cutaway bus market having delivered more than 2,500 buses, or more than 70 percent of the estimated total low-floor cutaways sold in Canada and the U.S. over the past five years.

As the U.S. population ages and ease of access becomes more of a focus, NFI Group's manage-

ment believes ARBOC is ideally positioned to grow with the demand for low-floor cutaway and medium buses with greater accessibility, following the migration that occurred in heavy-duty transit space.

ARBOC is expected to deliver approximately 360 buses in 2017 with a revenue mix of \$36.3 million for bus sales and \$1.5 million for parts sales. That number is expected to grow to approximately 500 buses in 2018.

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THE DOCKET

\$378 million saved through rule delays, less paperwork

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration's efforts to reduce regulations have already resulted in annualized savings of \$378 million, largely by cutting paperwork and delaying implementation, according to a report by the American Action Forum (AAF).

The report by Dan Bosch, director of regulatory policy for AAF, found that only a fraction of 1 percent of the savings came from substantive regulatory changes.

Bosch said, however, that there is greater potential for more savings next year from substantive changes and less from simple delays.

AAF analyzed 16 rules classified as deregulatory actions with net estimated cost savings published in the *Federal Register* from January 23 through November 27.

AAF identified five categories

of savings:

- Shifting of responsibilities (away from public sector to contractors)
- Delays (such as extending compliance deadlines)
- Paperwork (including information collection requests, applications and reporting)
- Regulatory changes (modifications in how the regulation functions)
- Withdrawal of rules

Of the 16 rules, only one clearly identified more than one cost-savings category: the Hospital Inpatient Prospective Payment Systems for Acute Care Hospitals rule, which accrued its savings primarily from paperwork reductions, with some from regulatory changes.

The annualized savings from these rules comes to \$378 million,

with nearly half of those savings derived from paperwork reductions (\$179 million, or 47 percent).

Another significant portion came from delays (\$136 million or 36 percent). Of the remaining 17 percent, just 0.29 percent (or \$1.1 million) came from regulatory changes.

Of the 16 rules, seven derived all or most of their savings from reductions in paperwork. Six rules earned savings from delays. There was one rule apiece from each of the remaining categories — regulatory changes, shifting responsibility and withdrawal.

Writing about the report on the AAF's website, Bosch said "the findings show that regulators are more easily identifying assessable cost savings in paperwork requirement reductions and compliance delays than in substantive changes

to regulations or simple withdrawals."

"The likely reason is that these actions are less controversial and require less justification than major changes. They also require less time. Changes and withdrawals generally need to be proposed and available for public comment for longer periods of time than other types of changes."

Bosch said there should be more savings in 2018 through more substantive changes in regulations rather than through paperwork reduction and delaying rules.

"Many of the delays were to rules finalized under the Obama administration," he said. "The Trump administration could justify these delays politically by arguing that holding them would provide adequate time to assess impact and ensure regulated enti-

ties have a better chance to comply.

"The further we get from Obama-era rules, however, the fewer compliance deadlines there will be to delay, as more and more will have come into full effect.

"In 2018 we should expect more notable deregulatory actions to be finalized."

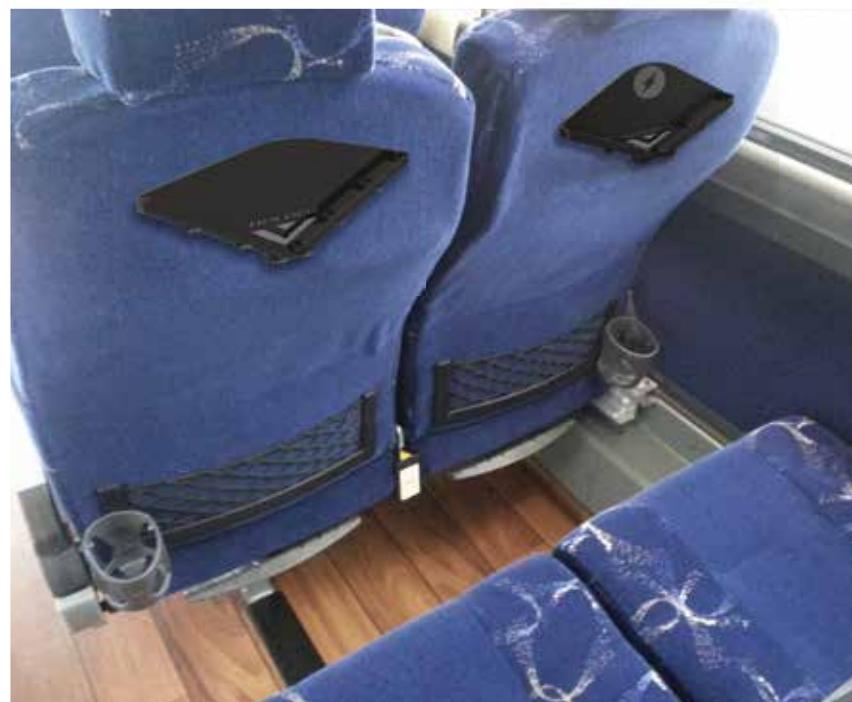
He said rules the administration will likely rescind or substantially revise are the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Power Plan and Waters of the United States rules, and the Department of Labor's overtime rule.

"There are potentially billions in savings from these rules alone," Bosch said. "While the savings from additional delays may be drying up soon, expect more substantive regulatory actions — and savings — in the year ahead."

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USDOT to begin testing drivers for opioids

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Transportation announced that starting in January, drug testing for transportation workers — including bus drivers — would include four semi-synthetic opioids.

Drug testing will now include oxycodone, oxymorphone, hy-

drocodone and hydromorphone, which go by brand names such as OxyContin, Vicodin, Percocet and Dilaudid. (See related article on Page 10.)

The new tests will affect workers regulated by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, Federal Railroad Administration,

Federal Transit Administration, Federal Aviation Administration, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration and U.S. Coast Guard.

More than 33,000 Americans died from opioid-related overdoses in 2015, according to the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention.

“The ability to test for a broader range of opioids will advance transportation safety significantly and provide another deterrence to opioid abuse, which will better protect the public and ultimately save lives.” Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao said in a bulletin.

Florida driving school closed

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Florida has closed the third-party commercial driver's license testing company Key Power Driving & Traffic School, reporting that its “practices posed an immediate serious danger to the public health, safety and welfare.”

As a result, 1,500 commercial drivers licensed through Key's two testing facilities are in danger of losing their CDLs if they don't retake and pass their driving tests.

An investigation by the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration found that Key conducted fraudulent testing activities, including ignoring parts of the required three-part skills test and tampering with test data.

Pass rates for tests dropped from 60 percent to 11 percent when department reps were on-site monitoring the results.

Students who were tested by Key at its Miami and Labelle facilities on or after Jan. 1, 2017, will receive a notification from the state and must be retested.

Idaho man jailed for USDOT fraud

BOISE, Idaho — An Idaho man was sentenced in federal court to 18 months in prison and two years probation for making false statements to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

Aaron G. Hynes of Kuna, Idaho, was also ordered to pay a \$100 special assessment and \$32,439 in restitution.

In July 2017, Hynes pleaded guilty to filing a false application with FMCSA for the purpose of obtaining a USDOT registration number.

Hynes solicited assistance from computer programmers to create a program that would automatically fill out at least 10,000 applications for USDOT numbers on the FMCSA website, using fictitious names, addresses and telephone numbers of applicants and company officials.

His purpose was to fraudulently obtain USDOT numbers and sell them to motor carriers for a profit.

In October 2015, Hynes submitted approximately 2,100 fictitious applications for USDOT numbers. FMCSA registered the applicants and issued approximately 2,100 USDOT numbers.

Hynes' activities caused FMCSA to lose \$51,389.

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FMCSA seeks approval for survey of driver commute times

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration is seeking approval from the Office of Management and Budget to conduct a survey about the amount of time commercial vehicle operators, including passenger bus drivers, commute to work.

The survey would fulfill Section 5515 of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act of 2015, which requires FMCSA to conduct a study on the safety effects of motor carrier operator commutes exceeding 150 minutes.

The survey would include the number and percentage of drivers who commute; the distances traveled, time zones crossed, time spent commuting, and methods of transportation used; research on the impact of excessive commuting on safety and CMV driver fa-

tigue; and the commuting practices of CMV drivers and policies of motor carriers.

The issue of commute time came to the forefront in June 2014 when truck driver Kevin Roper slammed into the rear of a van carrying comedian Tracy Morgan.

The crash killed comedian James McNair and seriously injured Morgan and others. Morgan, a former "30 Rock" and "Saturday Night Live" star, suffered brain trauma, broken ribs and a broken leg.

A report by federal transportation safety investigators said Roper was driving 65 mph in the 60 seconds before he slammed into the van. The speed limit on that stretch of highway is 55 mph and was lowered to 45 mph that night because of construction.

An NTSB investigation concluded in August that Roper hadn't slept in the 28 hours before the crash.

Roper lived in Georgia, but was based out of Delaware. Officials said he spent a portion of the 28 hours commuting from Georgia to Delaware to pick up his load.

FMCSA said the survey would seek responses from 250 truck drivers and 250 passenger bus drivers.

FMCSA said the objective of the proposed survey would be to learn more about CMV driver characteristics such as work history; commuting time, transportation mode, and recording of that time; driving schedules; rests and breaks; miles driven annually; and demographics.

FMCSA said long commuting times can adversely affect CMV drivers in multiple ways, including reducing a driver's available off-duty time for sleep and personal activities, which can lead to excessive fatigue while on duty and create safety concerns for both the CMV driver and others on the road.

The agency also cited a study of a region in Texas where 90 percent of the people commute to work. The study monitored more than 4,000 adults in the area. Results revealed the longer the commute the less physically fit the driver, including poorer cardiovascular health. The study showed that people who commute long distances to work weigh more, are less physically active and have higher blood pressure.

According to the FMCSA notice seeking approval for the survey, both the number of workers and distance to affordable housing have increased in the past two decades. Increased traffic delays have led to commuters spending an extra 7 billion hours in their vehicles in 2015.

Public comments on the data collection proposal will be accepted through Jan. 26, 2018. When or if FMCSA completes the study, it must be submitted to Congress within 18 months.

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New opioid testing requires review of drug policies

By Bob Crescenzo

In response to the nation's opioid epidemic, the U.S. Department of Transportation has issued new Part 40 drug testing regulations and published a guidance to assist employers with updating their testing policies. The changes take effect Jan. 1.

While the rule includes some technical procedural changes, such as no longer requiring blind sample/specimen testing, the major change affecting transportation companies pertains to opioid testing.

This article focuses on that issue and provides some suggested best practices. Company management should contact its drug-testing consortium, Medical Review Officer (MRO) or other provider, and consider seeking legal advice to integrate these changes into its substance abuse testing policy and procedures.

Currently, one of the five drug types screened for in a USDOT drug test is opiates. The new rule amends the drug-testing program requirements by adding four semi-synthetic opioids to the drug-testing panel. These opioids, which are often prescribed by a physician for pain management, are hydrocodone, hydromorphone, oxycodone and oxycodone.

The more commonly known trademarked brand names for these drugs include OxyContin, Percodan, Percocet, Vicodin, Lortab,

Dilaudid and Exalgo.

Focusing on the regulatory changes regarding opioids, it is important to note that the MRO will continue to make the decision whether a test is positive or negative after providing the tested employee the opportunity to document the appropriate use of properly prescribed medications.

The expansion of opioid testing likely will impact employees, MROs and operators because there previously was no way to determine which opioid was being used. It may also be assumed that there will be a significant jump in lab positive results due to the increased number of opioids subject to the testing protocol.

Lab positive results are the lab results with quantification analysis that are sent to the MRO, not to the operator. The MRO review process requires the MRO to communicate with the employee to inquire about prescription use, as well as determine whether, if a prescription exists, it is being used properly.

The final rule also added methylenedioxyamphetamine (MDA) to the amphetamine analysis and removed methylenedioxyethylamphetamine (MDEA). This is mainly due to changes in the substances currently found in amphetamines. As such, employees will no longer be tested for MDEA.

Moreover, the rule adds three reasons for a "fatal flaw" when a laboratory will reject and discard a



specimen, and modifies the "shy bladder" process so that the collector will discard certain questionable specimens and proceed under the shy bladder process for the second specimen.

In light of these changes to the Part 40 drug-testing regulations, there are several "best practices" to consider before the January 1 implementation date, including:

1. Review and revise your substance abuse policy and procedures. This can be done with your consortium, MRO or labor attorney, with a focus on updating the drugs subjected to testing and how the MRO review is communicated to employees.

2. Update your employee substance abuse and training programs. Communicate to all employees that the four semi-synthetic opioids will now be subject to testing and remind them to work with their physician before these drugs are prescribed. Additionally, stress to employees the importance of managing their driving responsibilities

while taking any prescription or over-the-counter medications.

3. Examine additional interaction opportunities between the employee, MRO, prescribing physician and the company Designated Employer Representative (DER).

It should also be noted that the MRO review process might result in a negative test. However, the MRO has the responsibility to determine whether the prescribed opioid will "disqualify" the driver, or if continued performance (driving) could likely pose a safety risk.

Even after a test is reported as negative, the MRO and employee have an additional five days to review and process the information discussed during the MRO review process.

One possible problem that might arise as a result is when a negative test result is reported, the driver continues to drive (appropriately) and then, up to five days later, the MRO reports to the DER that the driver might pose a safety

risk. Furthermore, companies might employ drivers who are prescribed opioids, but are not selected for a random drug test or do not require a post-accident or reasonable suspicion test.

In order to help avoid problems under such scenarios, consider taking the following additional steps:

1. Identify a designated Medical Examiner (ME).

2. Set up a procedure for employees (drivers) to report the use of prescribed opioids to the company's designated ME, and have the driver cleared by that medical professional.

3. Establish a procedure that refers drivers to the ME when, after a negative drug test, the company is informed that they might pose a safety risk.

Despite receiving negative drug tests, being informed by MROs that drivers might pose a safety risk could create situations where inaction is not a good option. It's prudent to have those drivers cleared by the ME to help mitigate the risk.

The best practices presented here are provided as suggestions for consideration. But, clearly, taking action now could smooth the transition to these new regulations and help you manage your operation more safely, efficiently and within compliance.

Bob Crescenzo is vice president of Lancer Insurance Company, the nation's No. 1 bus and motorcoach insurer.

Maine operator

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

transport sports teams and for chartered trips, business worth \$266,000 in 2017.

The operators said they have no immediate plans to file a law-

suit, and they apparently don't have the option of filing a complaint with the FTA over charter service rule violations.

Instead, they are planning an extensive campaign to convince politicians, university leaders, students and taxpayers that the agree-

ment is a waste of public funds.

Ken Presley, vice president of industry relations and COO of UMA, said the situation in Maine isn't a violation of the federal charter service rule that prohibits public-transit agencies from using taxpayer funds to compete with

private bus companies.

But he said the issue is important because "there has been a trend recently where we have seen transits incorporating charter service into scheduled service routes. When they do that, it is no longer charter."

"While it's not against the law, do local citizens really want to use their tax dollars to needlessly harm businesses?" Presley asked. "With no legal relief, the guys decided to band together to see if they could sway public opinion. That's where we are now."

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Young Transportation
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Expect the worst and you might be pleasantly surprised

By Dave Millhouser

"I found a shortcut to the airport, and you only have to drive the wrong way for two blocks," said my pal.

In order to cut five minutes off an airport run, he was willing to risk going "bass-ackward" on a one-way street for two blocks. I'm not sure of the statute of limitations on this kind of thing, so he (John) shall remain nameless.

The point is that, if you were headed to Philadelphia International Airport and were turning onto that one-way street, you'd want to look BOTH ways, even though traffic should have been coming only from one direction.

My nameless friend (John) is the incarnation of the defensive driving principal, "Always assume the other guy will do the wrong thing and he will rarely disappoint you."

Years ago I was driving my beloved MG Midget in a snowstorm (always a bad idea). The car stopped in front of me was towing a homemade trailer. As he started

into the intersection, assuming it was my turn next I looked left and right for oncoming traffic, popped the clutch and plowed into the back of him. Gee whiz, who'd a thunk he'd stop in the middle of the road for no reason?

It was a tragic sight. The trailer's wood body came off the axle and twirled down the icy road, with all his worldly belongings trailing behind. Silly me for trusting him to do the logical thing and keep going.

A New Jersey-based coach driver was deadheading into Boston's Logan Airport and assumed there'd be plenty of clearance for his bus. He didn't even apply his brakes as he entered an underpass.

The 11-foot underpass ate his 12-foot bus. It struck so hard that the top half was shifted five feet back, and ended sorta hanging over the road. The driver's mistake was taking for granted that a major international airport was well designed. What was he thinking?

One day on my way to deliver a bid on a large bus purchase, I was rolling down a main drag. A lady on a side street stopped, looked

'Gee, you'd have thought that being guided by someone who knew both the building and buses would work out OK...'

both ways, and then pulled out, tearing the front off my car. Gee whiz, she'd looked right at me, so it seemed reasonable that she'd wait until I passed. Nah.

The policeman, who arrived shortly after the crash, was kind enough to let me walk to drop off the bid and come back to complete the paperwork.

In ye olden days the best independent bus repair facility in Atlanta was housed in an old dairy barn. The Scenicruiser I was driving needed some sort of maintenance, and they had me back into a tight spot. The guy directing me had worked there for years and knew the place well, so when he waved and yelled, "Come on back" — I did.

BAM. Meanwhile, he kept

yelling to keep backing. Turns out he was watching a wall and the bottom of the bus, but the barn roof had an overhang that had punched through the rear window and was now inside the coach. When he looked up he yelled "stop," but it was a bit late.

Gee, you'd have thought that being guided by someone who knew both the building and buses would work out OK, and that I could count on him to get it right.

You get it. Assuming the other guy is going to get it right is a risky business. We are far better off expecting the worst and being pleasantly surprised (or amazed) when folks get it right. With all the distractions that today's drivers entertain it might even be a miracle.

You can make it sort of a game while you're driving. Is that directional signal sincere, or a feint? Is that car REALLY going to notice that stop sign? Does oncoming traffic think a red light is just a suggestion? Is that really a one-way street or is it a trick?

If you are driving around the ocean captaining an 800-foot tank-

er and headed into port, you normally pick up a pilot to help navigate. Presumably the pilot is familiar with all the intricacies of the harbor

such as tricky turns, currents and obstructions, and you count on that expertise to help you get safely into your tanker-parking place.

One thing you may not know is that, no matter how good (or bad) the pilot's skills, the captain is always responsible. It may not be fair, but if the ship squats on a sandbar, it will be the captain's fault. The pilot advises, but the captain is in command.

Assuming others will get things right or use common sense is risky. Control your destiny (and your passengers) by planning for them to mess up, and hoping you're disappointed.

Dave Millhouser is a bus industry marketing consultant and freelance writer. Contact him by email at Davemillhouser@gmail.com.



Dave Millhouser

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Cybercrimes

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

last year, resulting in \$2.4 million in thefts. Because these crimes often are not reported, the totals likely were much larger.

“They send an email that looks legitimate and official, but it’s not,” Cooper said.

“They might ask for certain types of information, like personal or employee or proprietary information, or ask individuals to click on a link, which in many cases people do. Once they click on that link their system gets infected and in some cases can be held for ransom until they are paid to get it released.”

Costly scam

A more common — and the most costly — technique is the business email compromise, a more sophisticated scam that targets organizations that regularly process payments by wire transfer or, less often, by check.

Last year the FBI logged 12,005 reports of business email compromise that cost victims \$360.5 million.

Problems often arise in the trucking industry, Cooper said.

“We see a lot of trucking companies whose identities are stolen, then individuals use those identities to get advances for fuel to pick up loads,” he said.

“By the time anybody realizes what is going on they are gone and have made \$1,000 on a fuel advance.”

The goals of ransomware perpetrators reflect business pricing theory in action — charge small amounts but build profits through volume, meanwhile reducing the risks of detection.

“If they can hit multiple companies a day and get \$500 here and \$1,000 there, they can make a profit and a living,” Cooper said.

By stealing relatively small amounts, ransomware criminals can be nearly certain they won’t be pursued by law enforcement. After paying to release his shop computer from its hostage-takers, Helms said he intended to call in law enforcement. The man who helped him figure out bitcoin purchasing told him it would be a waste of time.

“He had bitcoins because he was hacked,” Helms said. “He said there is virtually nothing anyone will do about it because \$500 is such a small amount.

That’s why they do \$500 amounts. It is virtually untrackable and the authorities will blow it off. He said he tried and even at his loss — \$14,000 — he couldn’t get anything done.”

The bitcoin is a “cryptocurrency” that exists only in the ether of the Internet. According to the website *bitcoin.org*, “Bitcoin is a consensus network that enables a new payment system and a completely digital money. Bitcoin uses peer-to-peer technology to operate with no central authority or banks; managing transactions and the issuing of bitcoins is carried out collectively by the network.

Exciting uses

“Bitcoin is open-source; its design is public, nobody owns or controls bitcoin and everyone can take part. Through many of its unique properties, bitcoin allows exciting uses that could not be covered by any previous payment system.”

Among those exciting uses is crime.

“The problem with bitcoins and cryptocurrency is that it is almost impossible to trace,” Cooper said. “Once they are able to get monies that way, there is no way to

track it down, especially for a small amount. That is why a lot of it is going unreported. There is no obligation to report it.”

Triangle Coach Service could have been hit much harder, Helms acknowledged.

“We were lucky it was on the shop foreman’s computer. It was all of our bus information, our repair logs and our DOT stuff. They didn’t get into the checkbook side of the computer,” he said.

He was able to end the attack in just three or four hours.

“I had never heard of bitcoins until this happened, so we had to find somebody to buy them from,” Helms said. “We had to set up a special account at the bank, buy the coins and put them in that account then email him the account number.

“He said he would make sure the money was put into that account, then he hit a button and unlocked our computer. We had everything right back.

“The guy we bought the coins from said some people don’t get their stuff back.

“Our problem was we didn’t back our computers up often enough,” Helms said. “Now we do. And take the drive you are backing

up on right out of the building and home with you.”

‘Stuff it’

If your computer is locked, “Then you can clean your computer out or buy a new computer,” he said.

With better backup files, Helms may have been able to tell his cybercroc to “stuff it.”

“If they had been asking for \$20,000, people would be more interested in doing something about it. If they had asked for that much I probably would have just wiped my computer out and started over again,” he said.

In addition to vigilance, Cooper recommended a sturdy defensive line.

“The one basic thing I can say to transportation companies is to talk to their IT (information technology) provider, whether it is a third party or in-house, and make sure they have the most up-to-date software they can possibly have to protect their systems. That stuff changes on almost a daily basis.”

Resources and tool kits for dealing with cybercrimes are available at the Department of Homeland Security website at highway-security@dhs.gov.

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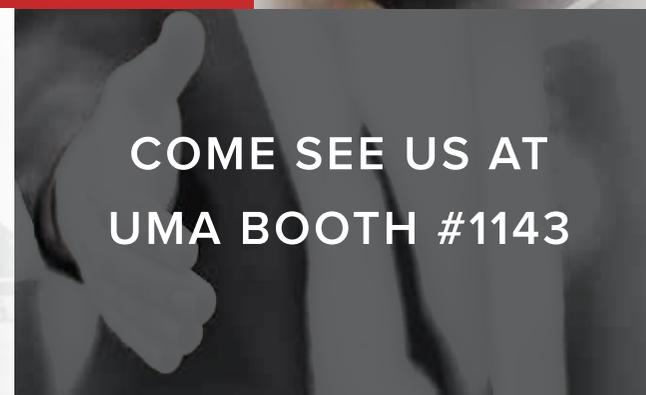
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Three San Antonio tours available to Expo attendees

SAN ANTONIO — Expo 2018 attendees will be able to choose from three tours at discounted prices. The tours will include a trip to Texas Hill Country and the LBJ Ranch, a historic city tour and a visit to the Spanish missions in the area.

The tours are all available on Saturday, Jan. 6. To book a seat, or for more information, go to www.graylinesa.com/uma. Use the code UMA2018 for 15 percent off the tours.

Hill Country and LBJ Ranch with Wine Tasting (9 a.m.-5 p.m.)

— This tour includes a visit the verdant Texas Hill Country, with its many wineries, lavender fields and peach, pecan and olive orchards. It will include stops at the LBJ Ranch and the “Texas White House,” and the Admiral Nimitz birthplace and the National Museum of the Pacific War (optional).

It also will take in the Main Street of the old German town of Fredericksburg, where visitors can shop for western art, antiques and Texas-European fusion furniture. The magic and music of Luckenbach, Texas, also will be

part of the tour.

Grand Historic City Tour (9 a.m.-1 p.m.) — This one-of-a-kind city tour is the perfect way to get a grand overview of old San Antonio and its rich history and culture, while playing Texas trivia along the way. The tour starts downtown with a visit to the San Antonio River locks, followed by Pearl Brewery Redevelopment, Butterkrust Bakery, DoSeum children’s museum, Witte Museum, San Antonio Botanical Center, McNay Art Museum, Brackenridge Park, San Antonio Zoo, Jap-

anese Tea Garden, History of the Great Texas Cattle Drives, and Union Stockyards.

The tour also will visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site — Mission Concepción, Southtown, and the King William neighborhood.

Spanish Missions Tour (9 a.m.-1 p.m.) — Find out what makes San Antonio an important part of American history while taking in the area’s Spanish influences at the missions located at the UNESCO World Heritage Site. The tour includes visits to Missions Concepción — the oldest un-

restored stone church in the nation — San José, San Juan and San Francisco de Espada.

Participants will be able to see the vistas, birds and wildlife along the new Mission Reach Hike & Bike Trail, enjoy mission silhouettes with Spanish- and Moorish-influenced architecture against the south Texas sky and see one of the finest examples of baroque architecture.

They also will follow the acequias, a Spanish irrigation system, from downtown San Antonio to the south.

Texas-style fun planned for 2018 UMA Expo After Party

SAN ANTONIO — People attending UMA Motorcoach Expo 2018 will be treated to an evening of Texas-style fun, food and culture at the Buckhorn Saloon & Museum during the Sneak Preview After Party.

The Buckhorn is totally Texas, from the antlers on the walls to the local Texas brews on tap in the saloon.

The Sneak Preview After Party will be held Sunday, Jan. 7, from 7

to 10 p.m., following the Expo floor opening at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center. Motorcoaches will take attendees from their hotels and the convention center to and from the event — a short ride.

The saloon at the Buckhorn is the site where Teddy Roosevelt recruited his Rough Riders and where Texas lore says Pancho Villa planned the Mexican Revolution.

These days no one is going to

ask you to saddle up and fight a war, but you can choose from seven local beers on tap and check out the original handcrafted marble and cherry wood back-bar from the Buckhorn’s glory days.

And don’t miss the chance to attend what might be your first armadillo race (this is really happening) and to tour the Texas Ranger Museum, which is part of the Buckhorn complex.

Established in 2006, the Texas

Ranger Museum houses numerous artifacts including revolvers, automatic handguns, sawed off shotguns, badges and photographs. Notable Texas Rangers are reflected in the collection, including Ray Martinez, Joaquin Jackson, John B. Armstrong and Frank Hamer.

The highlight of the Texas Ranger Museum is Ranger Town, a stunning recreation of San Antonio at the turn of the century. You’ll get the chance to explore the western

town that includes the replica Buckhorn Saloon, a working jail cell, a blacksmith shop and newspaper and telegraph offices.

Ranger Town is also home to the Bonnie and Clyde exhibit — complete with a vintage 1934 Ford V8 Deluxe, the couple’s famous getaway car.

Registration for the UMA Motorcoach Expo 2018 can be completed at www.motorcoachexpo.com.



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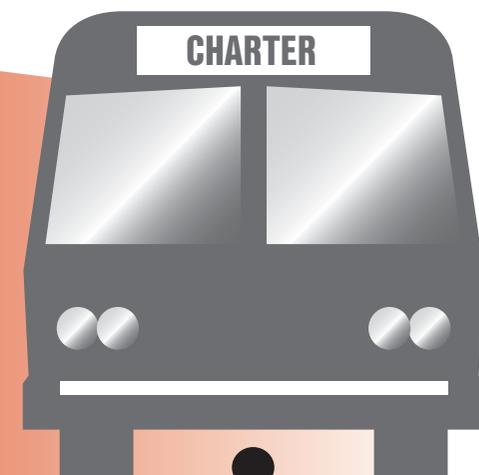
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Marketing Council to auction Prevost H3-45 during Expo

SAN ANTONIO — The Motorcoach Marketing Council's eighth annual live and silent auctions — to be held during UMA Motorcoach Expo 2018 in San Antonio from Jan. 6 to 10 — will feature a new Prevost H3-45 motorcoach.

The council also will host its fourth annual Glow Motorcoach fundraising party during Expo.

The live auction, which benefits the GoMotorcoach, an operator-supported marketing coalition working to advance motorcoach travel, will be held at 6 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 7, in the Prevost booth (No. 207).

"We couldn't be happier that Prevost has offered to donate to the council's cause in this way," said Christian Riddell, executive director of the Motorcoach Marketing Council.

"Because all proceeds are used to develop marketing materials to expand motorcoach travel in North America, this remarkable gesture actually benefits all operators within the motorcoach industry at large."

Jack Forbes, vice president for North American Sales at Prevost

Coaches, said the company appreciates everything the council does to support the industry.

"Their tools, training videos and social media materials are super helpful, and their enthusiasm for motorcoach travel is contagious," Forbes said. "We appreciate this opportunity to support

their work."

The council's silent auction during Expo will feature donated items such as trip packages, hotel stays, technology items, purses, clothing, parts credits and advertising discounts.

This year's Glow Motorcoach fundraising party will be held Jan. 7

from 9:30 p.m. to midnight at Pat O'Brien's in San Antonio. Tickets are \$35 and can be purchased at www.motorcoachmarketing.org/glow.

Riddell said the council relies on the fundraiser and auctions for its annual operating budget.

"We've been fortunate in the

support we've received from our sponsors as we've coordinated this event in years past, and 2018 looks to be no different," he said.

"Our mission to help coach operators sell more charters, to more people, for more money is a big task, and trying to do that on a limited budget is a challenge."



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New, returning Expo exhibitors

SAN ANTONIO — Twenty-two exhibitors — including coach leasing companies, upholsterers, onboard technology manufacturers and financial and insurance firms — will be making their first UMA Motorcoach Expo appearance in 2018 or are returning after an absence. They are:

- AmeriFuel – Booth No. 1031
- Ascentium Capital – 635
- Aussie Rimshine – 844
- AutoSock/McGee Company – 644
- BAE Systems – 630
- Chemfree Corporation – 526
- Coosa Composites LLC – 1142
- Crum & Forster – 1112
- Dartco Transmission Sales and Service Inc. – 945
- DriverSchedule.com – 613
- ELD Solutions – 704
- Infanti Bus & Coach Upholstery – 726
- Infinity Woven Products, LLC – 724
- Lilee Systems – 1140
- Master's Transportation – 1032
- Micro-Star International Co. Ltd. – 429
- OurBus Inc. – 1211
- Pro Image Car Care – 855
- Transit Cooling Solutions – 633
- Trolex Aporta – 822
- Unit Chemical – 1044
- Wilson (BBB Industries) – 535

Sell better bananas and make monkeys out of competitors

By Christian Riddell
Motorcoach Marketing Council



Christian Riddell

Let's raise our prices.

Ye p, yo u heard me. One, two, three — go! OK. Prices have been raised. See you next month.

If only it was that easy. I was recently asked to address a group regarding the shortage of drivers in our industry.

As many of you know from my time on the road, I don't really believe that we have a driver shortage; I believe we have a career crisis.

The way I see it, in our efforts to cut costs and keep our prices low (or profit margins high), we've created an environment where it is difficult for full-time motorcoach drivers to call their jobs careers.

It seems that we have created more of a "retiree side hustle," as it were, than a viable career opportunity for the working-class family.

If your feathers are ruffled a bit here, please stick with me. I promise this ends in a marketing conversation.

You see, I know that dramatically raising your prices isn't easy, and I also know that saying you are going to pay your drivers \$30 an hour plus benefits is even more of a stretch for most companies. (Besides, in order to even give consideration to the latter point, you'd have to raise your prices.)

So, here we are, stuck in the middle of a conundrum, a driver shortage sandwich that seems like an endless loop of "no can do's."

I frequently get calls from operators asking me if I can share what other local competitors in the motorcoach industry are paying their drivers. While this course of research is logical, I'm afraid it's about as useful as asking what size cannonballs the enemy is using in modern warfare.

Why? Well, motorcoach companies aren't really competing with each other for drivers. We're actually competing with public transportation authorities, school

Marketing Minute GoMotorcoach It's the Smart Move

bus operations, trucking companies, UPS, FedEx, and others who are all looking for commercial drivers.

Truth is, these companies pay more, have better schedules, offer remarkable benefits and are looking to hire the same drivers that we are.

So, I want you to put yourself in the shoes of the latest batch of new hires that have joined your team. You brought them in, gave them jobs and helped train them. You even got their passenger endorsements, and they're now ready and willing to work.

Now you start to get these types of questions: "When will I work next? How often can I expect to work? How many hours will I get a week? What about benefits? Is there a slow time? When can I expect a raise?"

While they're all important questions, they can, in some cases, be difficult to answer.

If you are like many companies I speak with, you're interested in limiting your full-time employee exposure. This means that even though you may need drivers, you prefer to staff your driver pool with part-timers who keep the conversations about medical, dental and vision insurance, paid time off and other benefits at a minimum. This is good for the bottom line and feels like a win.

But let's go back to those new hires with their fresh and shiny CDLs. What are they going to do? Are they going to be able to make rent this month? What about next? How about during the slow season? Is dispatch keeping them as busy as the regulars and passing the work around evenly, or do the new guys get whatever is left over after the regulars get their 40 hours?

That type of situation puts our new drivers in this quandary: Do I stay here and hope that I get enough work to make ends meet,

or would it be better for me to take my new CDL and find work that will guarantee my family is taken care of?

It's kind of a no-brainer; in most cases, they will choose the latter. Wouldn't you?

So, motorcoach operators keep bringing in Millennials, baby boomers and everyone in-between. But here's the thing: even if we train until we're blue in the face, we'll still suffer from a "shortage."

And, honestly, this cycle will continue until we go from "side hustle" (as Uber puts it) to real career choice.

How do we make that jump? On the surface, it's easy: pay more and offer good, year-round benefits.

But how do we do that?

Marketing.

Yes, that's right. We do it with marketing. We do it by stepping out of the commoditized transportation market and increasing demand for our product. This increase in demand will inevitably allow us to raise our prices and fill

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17 ►

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Marketing Minute

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

in the holes left by the customers who refuse to pay more for the quality we provide.

The most frequent concern brought up by operators when we talk about raising prices is the fear that there's going to be that one operator in the market who will keep their prices soft by not raising them. What then?

Well, if we were selling a barrel of oil or a ton of wheat, I would share that concern. But we're not. We're selling a service with a lot of differentiators that warrant varying prices from one company to another.

We know that not all companies are created equal, not all fleets are maintained to the same level, not all drivers are trained in the same way, and not all salespeople are punched out of the same rubber mold. Even though we know this about our businesses, we are often too willing to allow low-end operators to control our price sheets.

If customers are sensitive enough that a 10 percent, 20 percent or even 30 percent increase in price causes them to immediately

leave and go with another provider, they were never your customer. (You had wooed them with your prices, but they saw you as a commodity that could be replaced by another provider.)

Educate your customers

Marketing is important if you want to open new markets, but in the grand scheme of things, it's a crucial component of educating your existing customers about what you do, what you stand for and what sets you apart.

You must be able to clearly communicate what it is that you are doing to make yourself the best motorcoach provider in the area, and it's important to tell your customers why you value their business. They need to see how hard you work to keep them safe, comfortable and served.

Without this as a marketing objective, you are just another provider. And in that case, it's true: you probably can't raise your prices, hire more drivers or protect your profit margins.

With it, however, you can do all of those things. Marketing is not just about filling dispatch holes; it's about creating demand for what you have.

I have been helping my fourth grader with a lot of story problems, so let's talk about marketing using the following analogy:

Bill is trying to sell four bananas. He is in a farmers' market with lots of other people who are also selling bananas. He would like to sell his bananas for \$1 each, but some idiot down the row is selling his bananas for less than it costs Bill to grow his bananas. What should Bill do?

It's easy to feel bad for Bill because, let's face it, we've all been in his spot. But basically, Bill has a few choices. He can close up shop, eat his bananas and take up basket weaving.

He can discount his bananas to match the price of the other guy, or even drop the price a bit further and be the cheapest guy on the block.

Or, he can decide that he's been selling bananas for a long time, he's good at it, and being in business with a pricing model that loses money with every sale is a bad plan (cash flow or not). For the sake of our story, let's say Bill goes with the third option.

More bananas

So, what does Bill do next? He

decides to raise his prices. He comes back the next week with more bananas than he's ever had and sells them for \$3 apiece.

But here's the catch: Bill did something different this week. He peeled the bananas, froze them, dunked them in chocolate and rolled them in nuts. He made a couple of posters, stood in front of his booth and offered free samples to all the passersby. And guess what? He sold all of his bananas and landed a contract with a local restaurant. How smart is Bill?

What's the moral of the story? Let's be like Bill and think outside the box, stretching ourselves to be something other than a transportation-shaped commodity. Let's show our customers (and potential customers) that we don't sell green bananas in the bottom of a cardboard box.

What we offer is a delicious frozen treat, hand-dipped in chocolate and rolled in nuts. Let's demonstrate that because we are different (better, even), we won't be held to the price sheet of the guy selling green bananas.

Let's build a new world where the customers we work with are loyal to us, not our prices, and create enough demand that when

someone really wants a green banana, we can send them on their way with a smile and say, "Come on back when you want a better banana!"

More drivers

We need more drivers, and we'll continue to need them until we make driving a viable, full-time career opportunity that provides regular work and enough pay to comfortably support a family of four.

We won't get to that place until we can sell more bananas, to more people, for more money. Marketing isn't easy, and it isn't something you can do just in a moment of need.

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Rose Chauffeur Transportation, a 32-year-old company, acquired its first motorcoach nine years ago and now has 23 in its 60-vehicle fleet. Pictured from left are HA Thompson, president; his son, Andy Thompson, vice president; and Tom Holden, general manager and director of operations at the Pineville, N.C., company.

Limo expansion

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

agreed Kristina Bouweiri, president and CEO of Reston Limousine in Sterling, Va.

“It will be almost impossible to start a brand new coach company from zero and buy that equipment without a base of clients,” Bouweiri said.

The United Motorcoach Association supports the trend and has been working to help limousine companies make the transition.

“The trend of more and more limo operators expanding to offer their clients motorcoach transportation options creates an exciting new market both for coach sales and also for UMA as we help them make this transition,” said UMA President and CEO Stacy Tetschner.

“We are already looking at expanded online and in-person educational offerings in addition to expanding the offerings at UMA Motorcoach Expo to ensure those expanding into this space find relevant and valuable help from UMA,” Tetschner said.

Holden and Bouweiri are encouraging their peers in the uniformed transportation industry to fill the growing need for motorcoach operators.



Kristina Bouweiri

Rose Transportation and Reston Limousine built thriving businesses and reputations while operating car and minibus services before pursuing opportunities with motorcoaches.

Rose, a 32-year-old company, acquired its first motorcoach nine years ago and now has 23 in its 60-vehicle fleet.

“We needed to move more people at one time than our minibuses were capable of moving. We were farming out about \$250,000 of motorcoach business to local companies,” Holden said.

“The other reason was the destination management companies here were asking us what our industry was going to do about the motorcoach service. The quality of the service they were getting was not the same as the quality we were providing,” he said.

“So we decided to buy a bus. A month and a half later we bought our second. It has been non-stop ever since.”

A thriving livery business, stocked with options including

limousines, sedans, sport utility vehicles and minivans, offers a higher level of service than many motorcoach carriers, Holden said.

“The turnaround time, the quickness, the overall experience is much better with a company like us. Companies like us in our industry are traditionally open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We all have breakdowns — if you have a breakdown at 5:05 on a Friday afternoon, good luck in trying to find a bus company that is open,” he said.

“Our industry is always open, so I can call my friends in the Washington market, say I have a little problem and need your help. They are right there.”

Limousine companies also are accustomed to flexibility and personal service, he continued.

“We know things change. If a customer says we don’t want to be picked up at 6 a.m., now we want to be picked up at 5:30 because of weather conditions or whatever, they can get a live dispatcher and he will make the change. At that hour you can’t get a traditional motorcoach company on the phone.”

Holden called his company’s chauffeurs the “secret recipe” for the limousine industry’s exceptional service.

“I am not meaning to damage anyone else’s reputation — I know an awful lot of companies in the motorcoach industry who do a fantastic job. But there are plenty that cannot match the level of customer service our industry is giving.”

Reston Limousine hit the road 26 years ago and bought its first motorcoach in 2005 when it won a contract for a weekly 50-passenger trip.

“When I saw how much work there was for that coach I decided to buy another one and then I bought another one,” Bouweiri said.

“In 2016, I sold the three old ones and bought six brand-new ones. Those buses are the busiest

vehicles in our fleet. They are the most profitable. They run pretty much seven days a week.”

Reston’s fleet consists of 250 vehicles — about 25 sedans, six SUVs, the motorcoaches and a lot of minibuses and vans. That broad foundation can give a limo or car company a head start on building a motorcoach fleet, she said.

“The first advantage is that you can start the company small and grow organically. In my first 10 years of business I didn’t have a line of credit. I was able to self-fund everything I did,” Bouweiri said. “Obviously I financed my equipment but I didn’t need any capital for non-equipment expenses to grow my business.

“Also, it is not so easy to afford the maintenance or payments on a coach unless you have a steady clientele,” she said, recommending that carriers moving up to motorcoaches realize the budgetary implications.

“I think people get blind-sided by the expense of repairs. I remember the first preventive maintenance on my coach cost \$15,000. I almost passed out.”

Bouweiri said she often speaks at limousine conventions.

“Everyone tells me they are too scared to get into the motorcoach business,” she said. “I tell them to jump right in and buy one coach. A lot of the coach companies will give you a deal and offer to take it back if you don’t like it.

“You will see how busy it is and then you are going to want to buy another one. If I could have everything I want, I would buy three more right now. I can’t do that because I don’t have enough drivers and financially it would be too much of a dead burden on the company,” she said.

Uber and Lyft services have cut the revenues of some car companies by 40 percent, Holden said.

“They are not sure what the fu-

ture looks like for the traditional car company. A lot of them are trying to find another source of income. They already were in the minibus sector for their corporate clients and decided to get into larger buses and motorcoaches.

“Now they are finding the needs have grown. Some of them are growing quite quickly. Some have grown to 10 buses in a two-year period. That is shocking,” he said.

Holden refers to Rose Transportation’s limousine/motorcoach business model as a “hybrid” and believes it will be the future for many companies now operating smaller vehicles.

“I believe that so strongly I have told the motorcoach manufacturers that our industry is your future sales,” he said.

On the other hand, some companies are not meant to operate motorcoach fleets. Holden said when speaking at limousine industry events, “We go over a lot of the details our industry is not aware of — the cautions they have to look for before they buy a motorcoach. Not every livery company should buy a motorcoach.”

He delivers another caution about the difficulties of staffing a fleet.

“All of us are suffering from the need of finding drivers.”

Livery operators who have a steady portfolio of corporate work are well suited to support motorcoach operations, Holden said.

“The companies that are doing a lot of corporate work — say 80 percent of their general income — are going to end up being in a motorcoach. Maybe it will be one, maybe a whole fleet.”

Bouweiri agrees. “The people who are in business now will do very well if they start to focus on the coach buses,” she said. “I would venture to say that the motorcoach business is where I will mostly be 10 years from now.”

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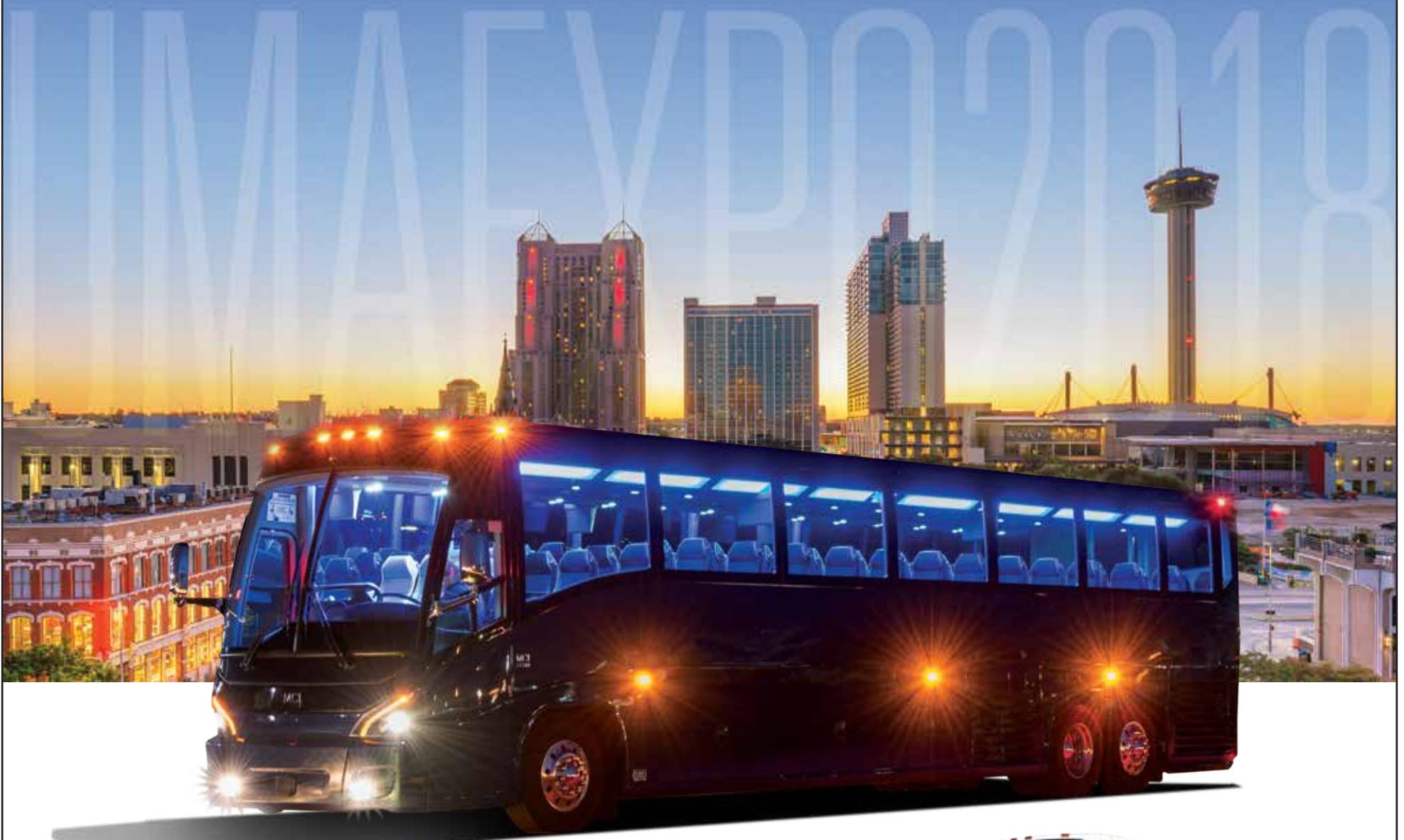


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