

# Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

## Industry seeks phase-in of national park fee increases

WASHINGTON — The National Park Service is considering raising peak season entrance fees at 17 of the most popular national parks, which could result in hefty increases for tour and charter buses.

Such increases should be expected, but they should be reasonable and phased in to the lessen the impact on motorcoach operators, said Stacy Tetschner, president and chief executive officer of the United Motorcoach Association.

“There is going to be a fee increase. It is just a matter of seeing what it is going to be,” Tetschner said after a meeting of tour industry officials and leaders of the Department of Interior and National Park Service.

Federal officials are analyzing 110,000 public comments submitted in response to its proposal to double or triple some entrance fees to generate about \$70 million annually to help address \$11.3 billion in needed repairs.

Tourism industries and communities dependent on park tourism have universally condemned the amounts of the fee hikes. The proposal would raise fees to as much as \$70 per private vehicle weekly

(now \$25 at some parks) and \$900 to \$1,200 per motorcoach.

It would cost \$50 to enter on a motorcycle and \$30 to enter on a bicycle or on foot.

Some commenters noted that higher entrance fees are being proposed at the same time the Trump administration budget proposal calls for a \$400 million reduction in park spending.

Tetschner joined National Tour Association President Pam Inman and Peter Pantuso, president and chief executive officer of the American Bus Association, in the February 5 meeting at the Department of Interior.

“They said they are waiting on a final report from the contractor that is analyzing the public comments,” Tetschner said. “Based on what we were hearing, I am pretty confident they have a model that is going to work for the Secretary of the Interior (Ryan Zinke) and are looking for validation from the data for that model.”

Nonetheless, Tetschner said the tour industry representatives stressed the need for charter and tour operators to work fee increases into their planning and marketing.



Grand Canyon National Park is one of 17 national parks that could see entrance fees rise significantly for tour and charter buses. UMA is pushing to have the fees lessened and phased in.

“We pushed hard to make sure we got at least 18 months notice and certainly think they could phase in an increase over time,” he said.

The impacts would be felt mostly in the western states.

“I find the proposed fees exorbitant,” said Michael Rogers, president of the Northwest Motorcoach Association and Beeline Charters and Tours in Seattle. “They will serve as a deterrent for groups wanting to experience our nation’s most beautiful landscapes.”

Vickie Cole, co-owner of American Stage Tours in Concord, Calif., and treasurer of the California Bus Association, said operators would end up passing the costs on to their customers, which mostly are seniors.

Lengthy western tours would be hit hardest, Cole said.

“We are out there two to three weeks and may hit 10 parks. We may lose people depending on how high the fees go,” she said.

In announcing the fee proposal in October, the Interior Department

said the increased fees for road-based commercial tours would “generate badly needed revenue for improvements to the aging infrastructure of national parks. This includes roads, bridges, campgrounds, waterlines, bathrooms, and other visitor services.”

The park service estimated the new fees could increase park revenue by \$70 million a year, a 34 percent increase over the \$200 million collected in fiscal 2016.

Many commenters called the

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Ten motorcoaches were rushed into duty by Quick’s Bus Company of Staunton, Va., to pick up 139 passengers, including about 100 members of Congress, aboard an Amtrak train that crashed into a garbage truck at a railroad crossing.

## Quick’s Bus Co. transports lawmakers after train wreck

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — Ten motorcoaches from Quick’s Bus Company were summoned into emergency service after an Amtrak train carrying members of U.S. Congress crashed into a garbage truck at a railroad crossing.

The Jan. 31 collision killed a truck passenger and injured several passengers on the chartered train, which was carrying Republican members of the U.S. House and Senate to a retreat in White

Sulphur Springs, W.V. After the accident occurred at Crozet, Va., about 126 miles from Washington, D.C., the train cars and uninjured passengers returned to a railroad station in Charlottesville.

The 139 passengers, including about 100 members of Congress, were met by 10 motorcoaches that had been rushed into duty by Quick’s of Staunton, Va.

“We got the call about 20

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# Los Angeles tops list of world's most congested cities

KIRKLAND, Wash. — Los Angeles often gets slammed for its traffic congestion, and apparently for good reason.

The City of Angels, where the average motorist spent 102 hours stuck in traffic in 2017, topped the list of the world's most congested cities for the sixth straight year in the Global Traffic Scorecard prepared by transportation analytics firm INRIX Inc.

Peak-time gridlock in Los Angeles cost drivers \$2,828 each and the city \$19.2 billion from direct and indirect costs, the firm found in a review of 1,360 cities across 38 countries.

Other U.S. cities in the top 10 included New York City, which tied Moscow for the second spot (with drivers stuck in traffic 91 hours); San Francisco in fifth place (79 hours); Atlanta in eighth place (70 hours); and Miami in the 10th spot (64 hours).

Of the top 25 cities with the worst congestion, the United States accounted for 10. Rounding out the top 10 most congested U.S. cities were Washington, D.C., Boston, Chicago, Seattle and Dallas.

Overall, the U.S. ranked as the

most congested developed country in the world, with drivers spending an average of 41 hours a year in traffic during peak hours, costing drivers nearly \$305 billion in 2017, an average of \$1,445 per driver.

Direct costs relate to the value of fuel and time wasted, and indirect costs refer to freight and business fees from company vehicles idling in traffic, which are passed on to households through higher prices.

Despite the high costs of congestion in Los Angeles and other cities, American drivers, in general, had it easier than their German counterparts. At \$1,770, congestion cost the average German driver 57 percent more than an American, after adjusting for exchange rates and the cost of living.

Detroit had the lowest cost of congestion among the top 25 U.S. cities, at \$1,256 per driver, and ranked among the bottom in all three categories of costs: commuting, business and leisure/other.

"Congestion costs the U.S. hundreds of billions of dollars, and threatens future economic growth and lowers our quality of life," said Dr. Graham Cookson, Chief Economist at INRIX. "If we're to avoid traf-



Los Angeles, where the average motorist spent 102 hours stuck in traffic in 2017, topped the list of the world's most congested cities for the sixth straight year.

fic congestion becoming a further drain on our economy, we must invest in intelligent transportation systems to tackle our mobility challenges."

The scorecard found that both New York and San Francisco, the second- and third-ranked cities in North America, have a similar average congestion rate as Los Angeles

(13 percent), but show different commute patterns.

San Francisco, for example, had the highest congestion rate (tied with Boston) on arterial and city streets during the peak commute hours, while New York holds the top spot during the daytime.

New York's Cross Bronx Ex-

pressway topped the list as the U.S.'s worst corridor for the third year in a row, with the average driver wasting 118 hours per year.

The most improved U.S. city was South Bend, Ind., with a 25 percent reduction in peak hours spent in congestion since 2016. Several Texas cities also saw significant improvement, including El Paso (-13 percent), Austin (-9 percent) and Dallas (-9 percent).

A different study found that for the third successive year, Atlanta's five-level stack interchange known as "Spaghetti Junction," where Interstates 285 and 85 north intersect, is again the most congested freight bottleneck in the nation.

The American Transportation Research Institute conducted the study. Here is a list of the top 10 most congested cities in the world:

1. Los Angeles
2. Moscow (tie)
2. New York City (tie)
4. Sao Paulo, Brazil
5. San Francisco
6. Bogota, Colombia
7. London
8. Atlanta
9. Paris
10. Miami

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# THE DOCKET

## FMCSA clarifies two-year crash preventability program

WASHINGTON — A two-year crash preventability demonstration program apparently is causing confusion in the commercial motor vehicle industry, leading the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to issue a clarification about participating.

The program, launched last August, allows an operator to submit a request that FMCSA classify a crash as “not preventable” on the carrier’s Safety Measurement System profile in instances where the carrier was not at fault.

If a crash is found to be not preventable, a carrier’s private Crash Indicator Behavioral Analysis Safety Improvement Category, or BASIC, score will be recalculated with the crash omitted.

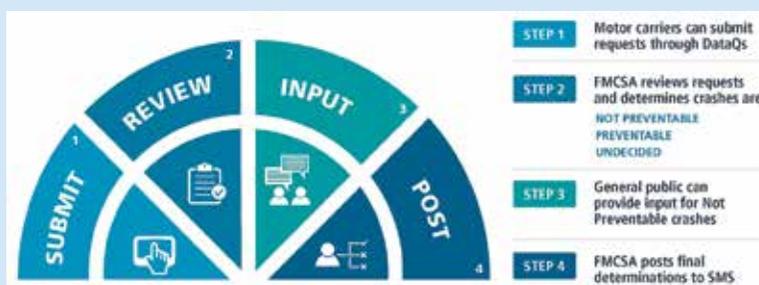
Under the program, carriers have to submit a “request for data review,” or RDR, through the FMCSA’s DataQs system, attaching documentation that establishes the carrier could not have avoided

the crash. The RDRs must be submitted for crashes that occurred on or after June 1, 2017.

Since August 1, 2017, more than 2,500 RDRs have been submitted to FMCSA. Based on the experiences operating the program for the first few months, the agency identified some areas of the program requiring more instruction and details.

FMCSA said some participants in the program are incorrectly submitting requests by entering crashes under the standard review program by selecting “Not an FMCSA-reportable crash.”

That designation is for crashes that do not meet FMCSA’s recordable crash definition of a fatality, injury or property damage requiring a vehicle to be towed from the scene. RDRs entered into the standard review program will be closed without a preventability determination because they were not submitted under the demonstra-



tion program.

Instead, FMCSA said, participants submitting RDRs need to select “Crash could not be prevented” for the agency to consider the requests.

Other participants have been requesting the review of an ineligible crash. Examples include accidents that do not fall under the eight types of eligible crashes or those that occurred before June 1, 2017. The system will close the RDR without any action for ineligible crashes.

The eight types of eligible crashes are:

- When the commercial motor vehicle (CMV) was struck by a motorist driving under the influence (or related offense)
- When the CMV was struck by a motorist driving the wrong direction
- When the CMV was struck in the rear
- When the CMV was struck while it was legally stopped or parked, including when the vehicle was unattended
- When the CMV struck an individual committing, or attempting to commit, suicide by stepping or driving in front of the CMV

• When the CMV sustained disabling damage after striking an animal in the roadway

• When the crash was the result of an infrastructure failure, falling trees, rocks or other debris

• When the CMV was struck by cargo or equipment from another vehicle

FMCSA also is reminding stakeholders that the burden of proof for preventability is placed on the submitter. Compelling evidence needs to be provided to the agency for consideration, including documentation that establishes the carrier could not have avoided the crash.

The United Motorcoach Association has been a supporter of the program because the current Safety Measurement System doesn’t differentiate between crashes caused by the carrier and those where the carrier wasn’t at fault.

That results in the carrier receiving a negative safety profile even if they were not at fault.



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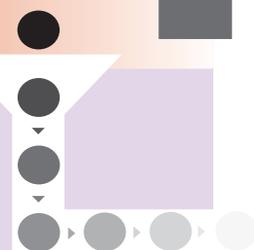
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# NY operators battling inspection fee

ALBANY, N.Y. — Motorcoach operators in New York State are once again fighting off a proposed inspection/re-inspection fee for all motor vehicles transporting passengers.

The proposed budget intro-

duced by Gov. Andrew Cuomo would impose a \$120 fee for semi-annual inspections that currently don't cost anything.

The Bus Association of New York (BANY), which successfully fended off a similar inspection fee

in 2015, is encouraging its members to send a letter to their state legislative representatives opposing the new proposed fee.

A copy of the letter is available at the BANY website, [www.bany-bus.org](http://www.bany-bus.org).

## Train wreck

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

minutes after the accident happened," said Jason Quick, vice president and general manager of the carrier. "We are one of Amtrak's vendors when they have weather-related incidents or delays. It is not frequent but they call us from time to time.

"Our dispatchers started calling drivers," Quick said. "From the time we got the call to the time we got to the Amtrak station it took about 90 minutes, and the station is 40 miles from our shop."

Quick's Bus, a United Motorcoach Association member, operates 34 motorcoaches with 17 full-time and 34 part-time drivers. When the Amtrak call came, it had a yard filled with cleaned and fueled motorcoaches and quickly found many of its drivers.

"January is the worst time of year for the bus business. It is pretty rare to find 10 drivers just like that," Quick said. "It is not every day you can do something like that. We ended up having a few drivers that we ended up not needing. We have a lot of good people and they knew why they were needed."

The Quick's fleet was met in Charlottesville by a security detail like few charter groups ever see.

"The security people went through all the buses and did the bomb sniffing," Quick said. "Security was very tight, but our drivers were saying how professional everybody was. When they left the station there were the 10 buses and at least that many state police cars and Suburbans and a helicopter."

Quick was returning from the American Bus Association annual meeting in Charlotte, N.C., on the day of the congressional deployment. Traveling along Interstate 81 at Raphine, Va., as the entourage approached, he and maintenance manager Henry Palmer found an overpass on which to wait and take pictures.

"The helicopter was flying ahead of the coaches and circled around to check us out," Palmer said.

"Our drivers got the passengers to their destination only an hour after they originally were scheduled to be there," Quick said. "Our drivers said it was very fulfilling, but they summarized the experience as 'intense.' They said things were well run and the people were exceptionally nice and thankful."

But, he said, "We are all upset about the fatality and the injuries. We work primarily out of the D.C.

area so we may glance at one or two famous people once in a while, but not this many at once. Hopefully next time it will be under better circumstances."

In addition to occasional Amtrak duty, Quick's Bus has experience with hurricane response service, Quick said.

"The processes have been honed over the years. We do a lot of tabletop exercises with the Virginia and Tennessee motorcoach associations to prepare for these kinds of things. There are a lot of good people involved, including TMS (Transportation Management Services)."

Virginia is home to U.S. Naval Station Norfolk, which supports 59 ships, 187 aircraft and 116,000 military and civilian employees.

"We run a lot of contracts for the Department of Defense so we do practice mobilizations," Quick said.

The military charters are one of the reasons Amtrak could call upon Quick's Bus on short notice to carry such important passengers, he said. "Amtrak knows we are background-checked every year and follow all of the DOT laws. We are in the DoD system so it probably is fairly easy for them to vet us."

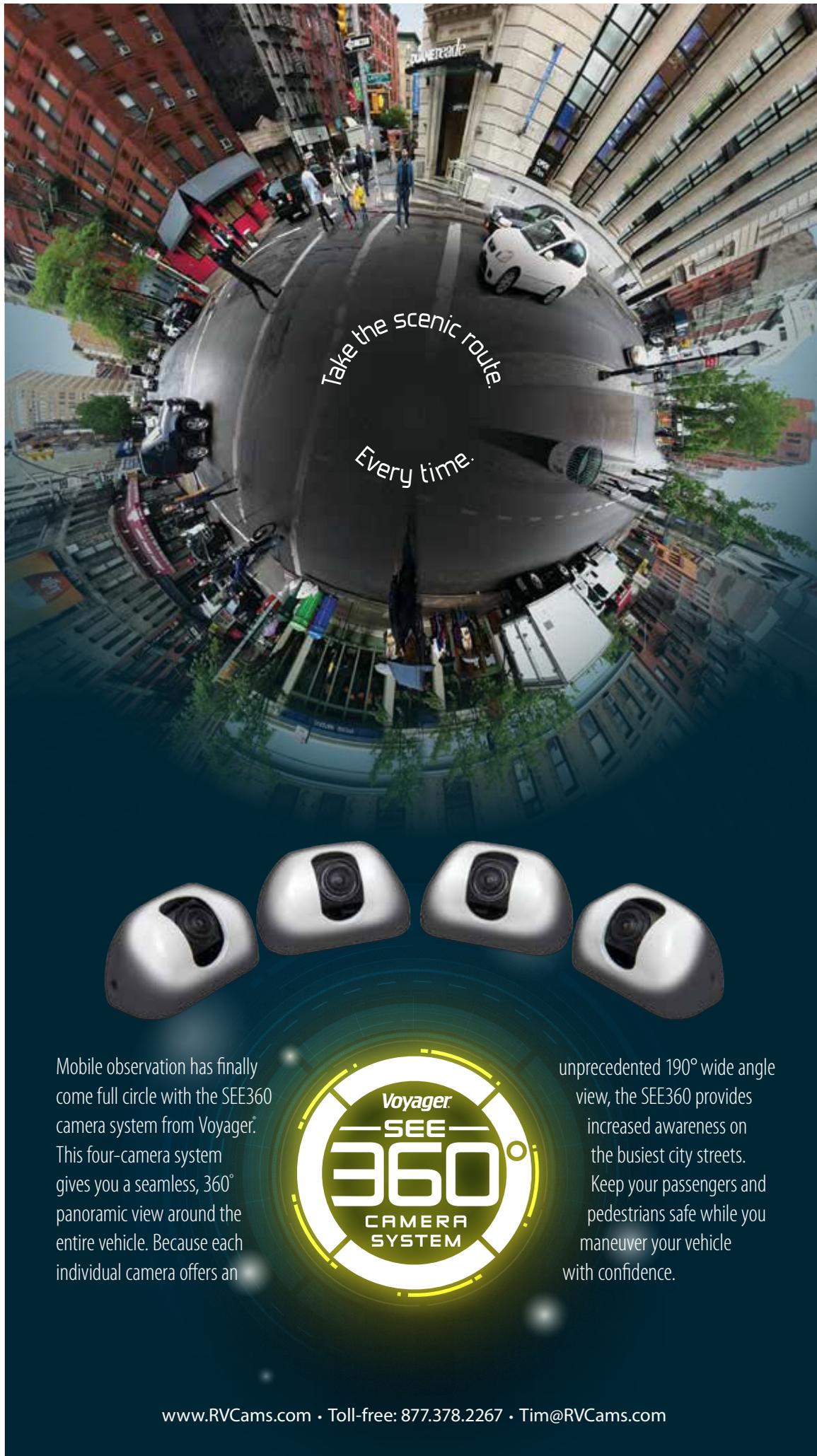
Did the politicians learn something about the importance of the motorcoach industry as a cog in the country's transportation system?

"I hope so," Quick said. "We are not always treated fairly. UMA and ABA do a spectacular job of looking out for our interests but it is always nice for people to see how hard we work as an industry to do good things."

The National Transportation Safety Board immediately launched a crash investigation. The train was travelling 61 miles per hour when it hit the truck, an Amtrak spokesman said, and the driver had the time to sound his horn and activate the locomotive's brakes for 20 seconds.

The collision separated the refuse bin from the cab and frame of the trash truck. In addition to the passenger who was killed, the impact injured the driver and another passenger on the truck. Two Amtrak crewmembers and three passengers on the train were taken to hospitals with minor injuries.

Amtrak President Richard Anderson said the truck was trying to weave through closed crossing gates when it was struck. Area residents told reporters at the scene that the crossing gates were known to malfunction and sometimes stayed down for hours when no trains were in the area



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# Navigating the seven stages of business development

SAN ANTONIO — Organizations pass through up to seven stages of development, and most stages are not good, said Les McKeown, an author, consultant and admitted “serial entrepreneur.”

“Four of the stages are clearly problematic,” said McKeown, keynote speaker at the UMA luncheon during Motorcoach Expo 2018.

“When you are going through these four it is obvious that you have got big challenges. There are three stages that feel pretty darned good. However, an alert — one of those stages is an illusion.”

McKeown has written three books, including the best seller “Predictable Success,” on which his presentation was based. He identified three key skill sets needed for an organization to pass from start-up to sustainable success: visionary, operator and processor.

Each is important at various stages of growth and all must cooperatively balance their roles to maintain their organization’s success.

“The first stage I call early struggle. It is a struggle for money from a very specific source — a sustainable, profitable market,” he said. “That struggle is typically three years.”

Few new businesses escape early struggle, with about 80 percent of all new ventures failing in those first three years. There are two key reasons for the high mortality rate — one is a lack of ruthless focus on finding that profitable, sustainable market, McKeown said.

“The second reason for the high mortality rate is the absence of a visionary. They are incredibly resilient. They will not give up. But the visionaries on their own

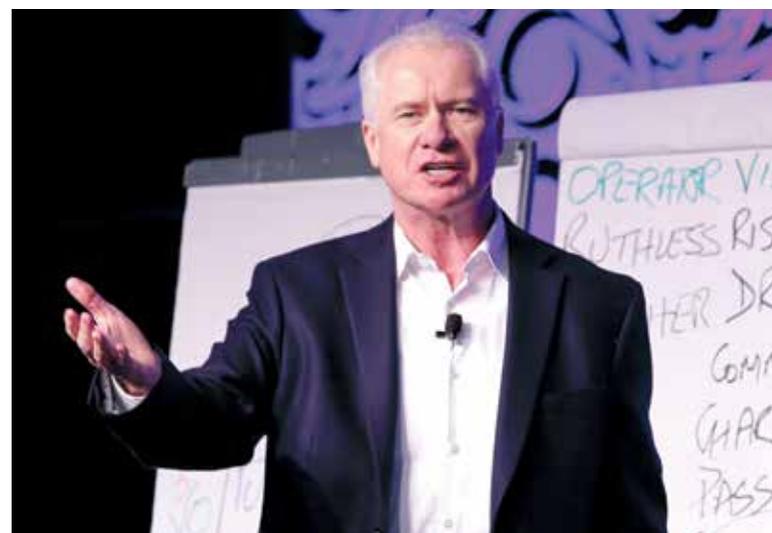
will not get a business to the next stage. What most visionaries do is link themselves very early on with someone I call the operator,” he said. “An operator is a ruthless finisher to the visionary’s ideas. They are a symbiotic couple.”

If the business survives early struggle, McKeown said, “It reaches the second stage that I call fun. After years of trying to find our profitable, sustainable market, now we get to mine it. There is tons of low-hanging fruit. We have nosebleed growth. Everybody is hugely motivated.

“We begin to build the business for the first time with a real sense that ‘We’ve got this!’”

This seeming success prepares the company for another troubling stage: whitewater.

“The word of mouth goes out that this great company will say yes



Les McKeown

to anything and deliver,” McKeown said.

What happens to every organization, at some point, has been building up all through fun and overwhelms our ability to deliver.”

That factor, he said, is complexity. “Our old business was pretty simple and then we added more people, more services, more products, another location, more

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# Selling or transitioning a business ‘can be very painful’

SAN ANTONIO — Transitioning out of a business can be as complicated as building it.

“The rule of thumb is to start planning three to five years before you want to make that transition,” said Christopher Goebel of Crossroads Advisers in Cleveland.

“The process works on preparing the business and business owners to face the eventual succession to someone who is a family member or someone who is in the business, or exiting it altogether,” said Goebel, who spoke at the Motorcoach Expo 2018 Solutions Session, “Preparing the Next Generation to Run Your Business.”

Eva Hotard, president and chief executive officer of Trailways, who also spoke at the session, said every business owner should work dili-

gently on making that company a well-oiled machine.

“You just can’t wake up one day and say, ‘I’m tired. I want to sell it.’ What are you selling? It has to be a strong, smart company,” Hotard said.

Goebel spent 30 years in his family’s business, Lakefront Lines, which was sold in 2008.

Hotard worked for 27 years with her family’s Hotard Coaches, continuing to serve as president and CEO after it was sold in 1999.

Generational transfers face unique hurdles, Goebel said.

“Fewer than 7 percent of family-owned businesses survive a second generation or transfer to a third generation. The second generation maybe didn’t run it properly and it is not worth transferring.

The second generation might sell the business or it is merged or rolled into a strategic buy with another company,” he said.

“A lot of the time they don’t have the people in the family to pass the business on to. It is one of the problems we are facing now in privately held or family businesses in general. There are quite a few of the next generation who don’t want to be involved and take all the time to run the business. They saw what their parents or other family members went through and they back away.”

Deciding which of the children, if any, are suited to run the business “can be very painful for the business owner,” Goebel said.

“You need to look at your children, or whoever you are transferring

the business to, to make sure they are in the right positions.” The love of a parent is a huge roadblock to making objective decisions on your own child’s competency, Hotard said.

“We worked with an executive coach for a couple of years to help us make sure the business was running like a business. If the family owns the business you are not subject to some corporate manager so most of the time family businesses are not too tough on their own members. Our coach used to ask, ‘Are you playing in the sandbox or serious about this business?’”

Continuing education should be required of all family members in the business, she continued.

“Family members working in the business may not have all of

the experience of the CEO, who could be a family member or not. A CEO has to be good at 32 different traits. How in the world are you going to achieve that unless you are constantly on the learning path? In this business everything is changing at lightning speed.”

Goebel advised business owners to build a team of experts to guide the transition. The advisory team likely will include a lawyer, accountant, insurance manager and wealth planner.

The coach also should address family issues, Hotard said. The coaching process might encourage the owner to stay for a while.

“If you are selling out of frustration or because the family may not be getting along, a third-party,

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## Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED MOTORCOACH ASSOCIATION

ISSUE NO. 348

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# Only perverts skip preventative motorcoach maintenance

By Dave Millhouser



“Folks, we’ve lost an engine,” announced the pilot. “Nothing to worry about. We have four and the plane can fly OK on 3.

“It’ll slow us down a bit; we’ll arrive about an hour late.”

A few minutes later, he came back on in his best pilot voice with, “We’ve lost another engine, but don’t worry, we can fly safely without it. Unfortunately it will add ANOTHER hour to our flight time.”

At this point one passenger muttered to his seatmate, “Gee, I hope we don’t lose any more or we’ll be up here forever.”

Modern coaches have a great deal of “backup” built into critical systems. Brake systems are designed so that if a part fails, the rest picks up most of the slack. Many buses have more than one alternator and several HVAC condenser fan motors. Gee, unlike

cars, buses carry spare tires.

Ain’t redundancy grand?

As with so many things, it can be a mixed blessing. We need to think of it the same way we think of lifeboats. They are great to have, but not where we really want to end up spending the trip.

When an alternator poops out mid trip and the bus limps back safely, that’s good. Dispatching a bus on a summer day with a couple of lazy condenser fan motors, hoping it won’t parboil passengers, is a bad thing.

Heck you get it. Hope is not a maintenance plan.

A couple of years ago a coach passed me and I noticed one of its passenger windows looked strange. Seems that the outer pane on a thermopane sash had cracked and the operator knocked the shards out with a hammer, leaving the inner glass intact.

It worked pretty well, but looked sketchy.

The point I am wandering towards is that we might want to think of redundancy like a hammer — it can be used to build things or break them. Knowing how and

when to use it is critical.

It’s great at saving our bacon when the unexpected happens, but it’s a risky alternative to doing actual maintenance.

One customer pulled into our facility on a summer day with a loaded bus and virtually non-existent A/C. This model coach had multiple evaporator motors and almost half of them were working.

Our trusty mechanic slapped some new ones in and voila — nothing.

A bit of extra detective work revealed that the HVAC’s thermostat control was thoroughly confused because it was blanketed in dust. It had no idea what the temperature was and had suffered death by fuzball.

The customer was irate that none of this was covered by warranty, and his passengers were not enchanted by their five hours at our bus garage.

When coaches first came out with redundant systems, they didn’t always alert us to failures. You could lose a component and not be sure. If things seemed a bit iffy, you could convince yourself

that you were imagining it.

Surely when fuzbus left the barn it had at least a hint of A/C.

Modern buses generally have that pesky orange light, and when it illuminates, it isn’t to brighten our day. The fact that everything seems fine is not an excuse to ignore it.

It could be something as innocuous as a failed reading light, but you really do want to be sure. The orange light is a close personal friend with the red one. If you are rude and ignore orange, frequently red gets even.

Preventative maintenance is the practice of fixing things before they fail in a nasty spot. Perverted maintenance is its ugly cousin that fixes things just after they cost you a ton of money.

The mixed blessing of redundancy sometimes helps seduce us from “preventative” to the dark side.

Around 1971 I was deadheading a Scenicruiser from Colorado Springs to Tucson. For the youths among you, a Scenic mounted 10 tube-type tires and carried a spare.

In ye olden days we thumped

tires with billies more often than we used gauges. Coulda been that they ALL were low?

Rocketing through the desert, that puppy blew one tire inner tube after another. Not bright enough to make the connection between tire pressure, excessive speed, hot roads and exploding tires, I first mounted the spare, then began running the duals with single tires.

Never one to waste anything, I had heaved the flats into the luggage bays and forged onward. Pulling into a Phoenix truck stop, I limped to the shop on the remaining six tires, dragged the five flats out and begged the tire guy to fix them in time to pick up my charter group.

This, folks, is a classic example of redundancy. In this case, that second tire on each rear dual seemed to be a spare.

Who needs 10 tires when six will do?

Either that, or it’s a glaring case of Perverted maintenance.

Dave Millhouser is a bus industry marketing consultant and freelance writer. Contact him by email at [Davemillhouser@gmail.com](mailto:Davemillhouser@gmail.com).

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# Community involvement is key to business development

SAN ANTONIO — Brian Scott had been involved in motorcoach industry group leadership for years, but decided he wanted similar involvement in his Florida community.

He started attending local transit board meetings and hearing things he didn't like. He asked questions, met transit officials and eventually filed a successful charter complaint against the transit agency over a no-bid contract for services he knew were not allowable.

"By doing all of that, by going to those transit board meetings as often as I did, don't think for a second that the people up there did not look in the audience to see who is there," said Scott, president of Largo, Fla.-based Escot Bus Lines. "If you go, you will be noticed and you will be paid attention to."

The involvement gave him insight into transit service workings and led to him being asked to sit on a local coordinating board for the transportation disadvantaged program in 2010, a position he still holds.

That led to filling an opening on his county's transit advisory committee, which led to an ap-

pointment on the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority board of directors in 2012, where he continues to serve as an appointee among elected county and city representatives.

"It's ... an interesting kind of full-circle evolution," said Scott, one of two panelists in an Expo education session on marketing and business development by engaging in one's local community.

"I started by going to the transit board meetings and being pissed off. Then I filed a charter complaint against them ... and now I'm one of them."

While Scott can't bid on services because of conflict issues, the experience provides him with valuable insight into the public-transit sector and what's coming up, which could help him later when he's not in a public role. He also can positively affect public policy.

He also has developed valuable connections with elected officials on the board. "So the advantage for me on this is that I know what's going on," Scott said.

Fellow panelist Mark Szyperski, president and CEO of On Your Mark Transportation consulting of



Brian Scott

Nashville, encouraged community engagement by motorcoach operators to boost awareness of their companies.

"If you just go to an event and sit, that's not engagement and involvement," he said, urging networking at events and meetings.

"Every chamber I go to tells me they get phone calls at least once a week" asking for a bus company to charter or for a bus company running scheduled service, Szyperski said.

After telling your chamber about your company, become a

member and talk to fellow members, he said. Oftentimes, you discover members who sit on school or church boards, or volunteer in other organizations who book transportation services and can be queried on how they book carriers, whether they know where to find safety records and the like.

"Start asking those kinds of questions," Szyperski said.

Involvement builds connections, Scott said.

"Being involved — whether it's a chamber or whether it's getting involved politically — is as much about promoting yourself as it is your company, because at the end of the day, you are your company and people don't do business with companies, they do business with people," he said.

"So it really comes down to establishing credibility with yourself and the local community and if you establish that credibility, you become the leading voice of transportation issues in your community and that's really kind of the ultimate goal," Scott said.

Political involvement, such as party contributions, can result in invitations to key events or receptions

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12 ►

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# Redoing lease rule to 'get it right'

SAN ANTONIO — A Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration official updated motorcoach operators on key issues — including the retooling of the lease and interchange rule and the drug and alcohol clearinghouse — during a regulatory update during UMA Motorcoach Expo.

Loretta Bitner, chief of the commercial passenger safety division's office of enforcement and compliance for FMCSA, acknowledged flaws in the agency's first bite at the lease and interchange rule and encouraged operator feedback on the next iteration.

"Did we get it right?" Bitner said. "Based on your petitions and your comments after the final rule came out, no, we didn't get it quite right. That's why we're redoing it."

FMCSA is working on a notice of proposed rulemaking to alter the final rule and then will seek comments on those changes, she said.

"It's a proposed final rule — expect that out later this spring," Bitner said. "When it does come out, comment; please, I'm imploring that you comment."

That will help FMCSA craft a better rule, she said.

"Give us real examples of how what we're proposing will affect or could affect your company," she said. "We want to get it right this time."

On the drug and alcohol clearinghouse, a database will contain CDL drivers' drug and alcohol program violations and will indicate whether they have completed their return-to-duty rehabilitation process.

The clearinghouse final rule went into effect last January and Bitner reminded operators of its compliance date of January 2020.

"This is two years from now — both drivers and companies have to start getting this in their mind that this is the way that things are going to work in the future," she said.

One issue she's heard over the years from operators is that they may have a driver on the weekends who works for someone else during the week and don't know if the driver tested positive while working for the other company.

"This is how you'll find out," she said.

Also, if an operator terminates a driver who tested positive, which is recorded, and that driver didn't complete the return-to-duty process with a substance abuse professional and the operator knows the driver went to work for another company, the requirement for

pre-employment testing will bring that driver's status to people's attention, she said.

FMCSA will check whether companies reported positive tests and whether they checked drivers before hiring.

"This (clearinghouse) was really to try to close in on the drivers

that are abusing illegal substances," Bitner said.

"The clearinghouse we're really hoping will solve some of these issues for you," she said. "We want the reportability to go up and the accuracy to go up so that you're not unaware of positives for your employees."



Loretta Bitner

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## McKeown

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

customers. Every single step along the way the business becomes more complex. At some point, our ability to say 'yes' and deliver by just improvising begins to fragment."

Escaping whitewater requires a third type of skilled leader, the processor.

"What do we need to fix this? Systems and processes. How good are the visionary and operator in not just designing but adhering to systems and processes? The answer is terrible.

"For the first time the visionary and operator realize their joint skill set is not enough to take them to the next stage. We need a third

type of person in the senior team, a person who thinks in terms of processes and systems, somebody who will make things happen repeatedly, regularly, consistently," McKeown said.

The processor should possess the skills needed by the particular business. He or she might be a controller, an HR person, an IT person, a warehouse manager or route planner."

The processor must not only be hired but also accepted by the visionary and operator.

"For the first time we have got somebody whose commitment is to doing the thing right," McKeown said.

Advancing from whitewater to the fourth stage, predictable success, "is all about getting those

three roles not just to put up with each other but to actually accept each other as fundamentally and coequally important," McKeown said.

Other hurdles must be overcome to keep the business in predictable success, he said. "At this stage you get the ability to scale but you cannot scale without a solid foundation of systems and processes."

If the skill sets do not cooperate, the fifth stage arrives.

"In theory we can cycle up in predictable success for as long as we want," McKeown said. "Many organizations begin to over-emphasize the process role and fall into the stage that I call treadmill. Here we are over processed. If we do the right thing, we reduce the

emphasis on process and come back into predictable success. If we don't do this, the visionary and operator will leave. They cannot abide and the business will fall into the big rut."

The big rut is illusory, he said. "We are still complicated and over processed but now we like it. Customers are a total pain in the neck, but we are big enough, rich enough and fat enough that we don't care. It feels nice."

Escaping the big rut is a business' last chance, McKeown said, "or we fall into the final stage — death rattle."

"It looks like something is happening but the business as it previously existed is dead. That is the model based on my years of growing businesses."

## Community involvement

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

with business and political leaders and also build one's credibility and contacts, he said.

Scott also encouraged enlisting in leadership programs common in many communities. The programs are designed to develop future leaders, whose training can expose them to key government, corporate and nonprofit executives, programs and resources.

"Through that process, you meet people that you will probably never otherwise come into contact with," and with whom credibility and connections are built, Scott said, adding that such programs are also good for key staff.

It takes time and money, "but the benefits are huge," he said.

## Selling a business

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

objective person can mitigate the family dynamics. You want that decision to be extremely well thought out and not an emotional one," she said. "It is a very difficult decision, because when you sell it, it is gone."

After determining the future management structure, the owner should address personal wealth

ramifications, Goebel said.

"They want to make sure they are able to take out the net worth they have built up in that business so they can maintain their standard of living.

"Most owners look at the proceeds from the business as their retirement savings," he said.

If the owner will be paid for the business over time, "It is critical to have the right management in place. They have to make sure the

business is going to survive long enough to pay the owner back over time. If the new ownership messes up, the owner may be left out in the cold or maybe have to come back to run the business," he said.

Lining up the succeeding management team is part of what Goebel called "de-risking the business."

"The value of the business is going to be based on the perceived risk the buyer is going to have. From operations to accounting to

finances, all of those areas need to be improved," he said.

About 80 percent of businesses are not transferable, he continued, "sometimes because they are very risky and the owner hasn't done things to make the business more valuable."

"About 30 percent of businesses will never transfer because the owners have no desire to transition them."

Exiting owners should consid-

er the personal effects of the transition, Goebel said.

"There is going to be a time gap they have to fill, plus an identity gap. They get a great deal of self-identity and worth from that business and they need to develop other things to fill that. One interesting statistic is that 75 percent of the people after one year regret selling their business because they didn't plan for what would happen to them."

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# Spirit Coach founder 'Clip' Coates dies at age 55



HUNTSVILLE, Ala. — Robert Frank “Clip” Coates, Jr., founder of Spirit Coach, died recently after battling cancer. He was 55.

A native of Huntsville, Coates graduated from Randolph School and attended Birmingham Southern College.

The Coates family has operated the Avis Rent a Car franchise in Huntsville since 1959. At an early age, Coates became president and expanded the business to include Budget Rent a Car and Budget Truck Rental.

His entrepreneurial heritage came to light in 2000 when he founded Spirit Coach and invested in the company’s first motorcoach. Spirit now operates 10 rental locations across north Alabama and 14 luxury motorcoaches that travel more than 800,000 miles a year throughout the U.S. and Canada.

Coates was committed to numerous community events and organizations including the Huntsville Rotary Club and Foundation, Crime Stoppers, Rise, Phoenix, Boys and Girls Club, Heritage Mo-

torcoach Resort & Marina, the Alabama Motorcoach Association, and the Avis Licensee Association.

His passion to mentor deserving young adults was fulfilled with the Huntsville Rotary Club STRIVE program.

In his spare time, Coates loved to take Sunday rides to find new construction sites, chase trains and “play in the dirt” with heavy equipment on his property. He also loved to travel, especially with his wife, Debbie, in their beloved motorhome.

Coates was preceded in death by his parents, Robert and Lois Coates, and his nephew James Anderson. He is survived by his wife, Debbie, their three daughters, Nicki Marlowe (Andrew), Brooke Alderman (Fielding) and Kasie Bishop (Ryan); grandchildren Brandt and Channing Marlowe; sister Jo Lynn Anderson; nephews Jason and Justin Anderson; great nephew Ashtin; and numerous cousins and many other beloved family and friends.

After his death in January, the

Alabama House of Representatives passed a resolution honoring Coates. It read, in part: “Be it resolved by the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Alabama, That while grieving the death of Mr. Robert Frank Coates, Jr., we are extremely grateful for his abundant life, and we offer this resolution in highest tribute to his legacy, as well as with heartfelt sympathy to his family and friends.”

## People

DES PLAINES, ILL. — Chad Sadowy has been promoted to Canada Western Region vice president of sales at **Motor Coach Industries**.

Sadowy succeeded *Guy Tessier*, who retired on January 8 after a four-decade career that included 29 years with MCI.

In his new position, Sadowy, formerly technical solution manager for the region, is responsible for both new and pre-owned coach sales in the territory.

Sadowy started his MCI career



Chad Sadowy



Steve Kuhn



Jen Rodriguez



Jeff Sather

in 1993 as production worker at the Winnipeg plant.

*Steve Kuhn*, formerly superintendent of maintenance for a multi-vehicle fleet transportation provider in Edmonton, Alberta, will replace Sadowy as the region’s technical solution manager.

Kuhn holds a journeyman certification as a heavy-duty mechanic and is a PEMAC (Plant Engineering and Maintenance Association of Canada) Maintenance Manager Professional.

Kuhn’s career in motor coaches and fleet management spans

29 years.

MIDDLEBURY, Ind. — *Jen Rodriguez* has joined the sales team at **ARBOC Specialty Vehicles**, a subsidiary of **New Flyer Industries Inc.**

Rodriguez was appointed to the regional sales manager position responsible for servicing existing accounts and establishing new customers in the western U.S.

She previously worked in sales and accounting.

GAFFNEY, S.C. — *Jeff Sather* has been named president and CEO of **Freightliner Custom Chassis**

**Corporation**, a subsidiary of **Daimler Trucks North America**.

Sather leads all operations of the manufacturer of motorhome, walk-in van, school bus and commercial bus chassis.

He began his career with Daimler Trucks in 2001 and most recently was financial business partner for the company’s operations and specialty vehicles group and its aftermarket division.

Sather succeeds *David Carson*, who is now president of **Western Star Trucks** and also is a member of the Daimler Trucks operating committee and is the company’s chief diversity officer.

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## Park fees

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

plan insufficient and misguided. Some disputed the projected increase in revenue because the new fees would discourage too many visitors or convert them to \$80 annual passes.

Critics also point out that the proposed budget for the next fiscal year reduces federal spending on the parks by 13 percent — nearly \$400 million.

### Top destinations

“National parks are among America’s top destinations, and our industry has consistently advocated for park funding,” the National Tour Association said in a letter.

“While we recognize that additional fees are needed to preserve our nation’s natural treasures, we are concerned the lack of a more staged implementation period to fairly and equitably implement the fee increase into tour packages will be burdensome on users of the parks and tour companies.”

The letter continued, “We also are concerned about the reasonableness and size of the proposed increase. Our organizations help to ensure that the movement of people through our parks is as efficient as possible.

“For example, just one bus can take up to 55 cars off the road, providing congestion and environmental benefits to all park users. In FY 2012, commercial bus fees were the third-highest revenue-related source for the parks.”

Under the proposal, fee increases for visitors in private vehicles would become effective when peak season begins in May or June. New fees on commercial vehicles would take effect in 2019.

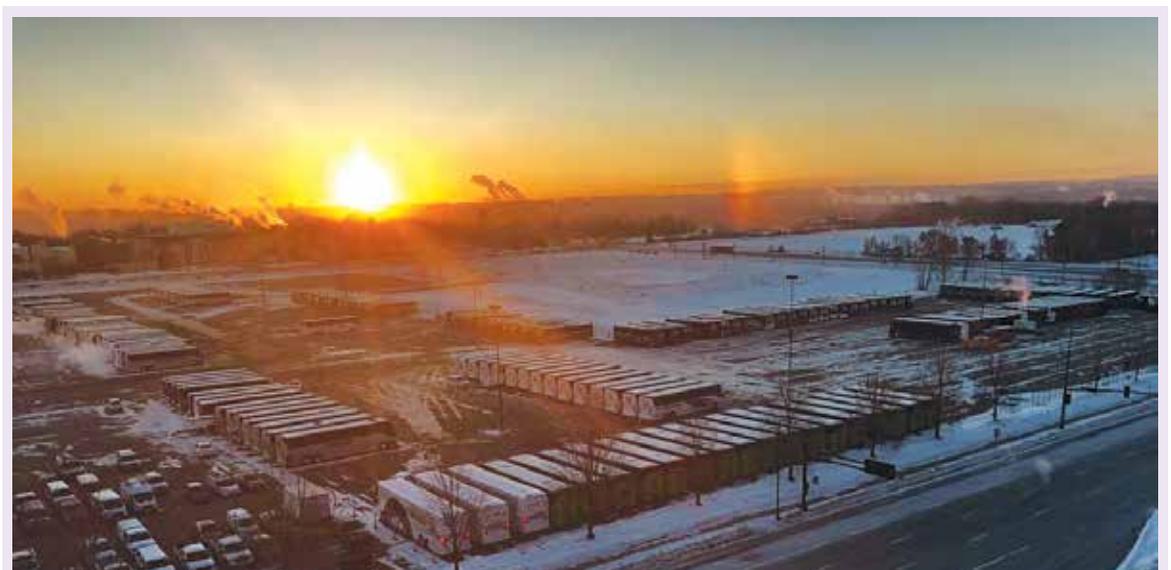
The selected destinations are Acadia National Park, Maine; Arches National Park, Utah; Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah; Canyonlands National Park, Utah; Denali National Park, Alaska; Glacier National Park, Montana; Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona; Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming; Joshua Tree National Park, California; Mount Rainier National Park, Washington; Olympic National Park, Washington; Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado; Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, California; Shenandoah National Park, Virginia; Yellowstone National Park, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming; Yosemite National Park, California; and Zion National Park, Utah.

The government operates 413 national parks that were visited by 331 million people in 2016.

“The amount collected from the increased fees would address less than 1 percent of the backlog of maintenance and infrastructure needs,” the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) said. “At the same time as proposing these massive fee increases, the administration has proposed the largest budget cut to the National Park Service since World War II.”

Rogers of the Northwest Motorcoach Association said he doesn’t understand why the Interior Department doesn’t raise the fees on energy and mining companies that lease public lands to finance the maintenance and management of the national parks.

“Asking cash-strapped Americans and small businesses to pay more in park entrance fees instead of raising money from large, multinational corporations that benefit from subsidized land leases and



**Super Dawn** — The sun rises over charter buses parked in the staging area at Mall of America in Bloomington, Minn., two days before the Super Bowl in nearby Minneapolis. Photo by Scott Buegler

the biggest corporate tax cut in history doesn’t make any sense to me,” he said.

NPCA, which has 1.3 million members, said the 17 parks supported \$6.7 billion in economic activity and more than 75,000 private-sector jobs in 2016. Visitors to all national parks spent \$16.9 billion last year, according to the park service, supporting 295,000 jobs and \$11.1 billion in payrolls in “gateway regions” — communities within 60 miles of a park.

The National Tour Association told federal officials that 74 percent of its operators include national parks in their packages and 58 percent believe a fee increase would affect decisions on including national parks in itineraries.

### Fees will vary

Some proposed bus and motorcoach fee increases will apply to all national parks that currently charge a vehicle entrance rate. The rates vary by park. Some parks only charge a per-person fee while entrance to 118 parks is free.

Those fees would be \$40 to \$80 for sedans; \$60 to \$85 for 7- to 15-passenger vans; \$110 to \$300 for 16- to 25-passenger minibuses; \$150 to \$450 for 26- to 56-passenger motorcoaches; and \$220 to \$600 for motorcoaches seating 57 or more.

Higher fees would be levied at the 17 selected parks during peak seasons: sedans, \$160; vans, \$370; minibuses, \$600; motorcoaches, \$900; and motorcoaches with 57 or more passengers, \$1,200.

The peak season for each park would be “its busiest contiguous five-month period of visitation.”

Additional fees would be charged for Commercial Use Authorizations (CUA), the park service proposal states. “For operations occurring after December 31, 2018, road-based commercial tour operators must obtain a CUA for each

NPS unit in which they operate.”

A CUA is required for the tour company that advertises and schedules the trip, whether it owns vehicles or charters them. The proposal explains:

“Beginning January 1, 2019, all parks will charge commercial tour fees made up of three components: an annual \$300 non-refundable CUA application fee...a CUA management fee (of) \$5 per client...and a commercial tour fee to be imposed on each vehicle entering each unit of the National Park Service for which an entrance fee is charged.”

Based on the February 5 discussions at the Interior Department, Tetschner said the government might be considering fees based on numbers of individual passengers rather than a flat rate per vehicle.

It is difficult to determine how many park visitors arrive in commercial vehicles. Each park posts an annual report on the NPS website, but the reports are not formatted uniformly and most do not identify vehicle types.

On average, 9.3 percent of visitors arrived by bus at the six parks that did count. At that rate, buses would have carried about 4.4 million of the estimated 47.3 million visitors to the 17 parks last year.

More than a third of international visitors to the U.S. visit a national park, according to U.S. Travel Association (USTA) and U.S. Commerce Department statistics. About 13.6 million foreign travelers — 36.5 percent of the 2017 total — toured at least one park.

The strong value of the U.S. dollars compared with other foreign currencies already is deterring some international visitors, USTA said. The organization said the average overseas visitor spends \$4,360 during an 18-night stay.

The National Park Service accepted public comments on the fee

proposals from October 24 through December 22. Submissions were posted online in data files that excluded most identities.

### Supporting increases

A scan through the files suggests most people believe national parks need more funding and would agree with modest fee increases. Some suggested that bus passengers, particularly foreigners, should pay higher fees. A few people wrote that foreign visitors could be culturally insensitive and cause damage to facilities.

In response, a tour operator wrote, “Motorcoaches usually have professional tour guides on board. These tour guides explain the rules of the parks, such as staying on the trails, not disrupting nature, etc.”

Steve Uelner, president and owner Country Travel Discoveries in Elm Grove, Wis, submitted the letter.

Numerous state and regional tourism organizations stressed the economic and employment benefits of park tourism.

Some comments blamed bus operators for creating congestion in the parks.

“I don’t feel the buses are causing congestion — it’s all the cars,” said Cole of American Stage Tours. “One bus could take as many as 56 cars off the road. You are still going to get the people whether they come in 56 cars or one bus.”

The National Parks Traveler Club noted on its website that the Department of the Interior may not pay attention to the submitted comments. It referred to the department’s recent decision to shrink several Western national monuments.

“There were 2.8 million comments made on the proposal to alter national monuments, with a large majority against any changes, but that didn’t sway the administration,” the club said.

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