

# Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

## Relying on bus brokers: the good, the bad and the ugly



Brokered bus transportation companies such as Rally are becoming more popular, but examples linger in the industry's institutional memory, making some operators cynical when brokers are mentioned.

By Dave Millhouser

To paraphrase one longtime bus operator, owning and operating motorcoaches is tough enough without adding marketing and sales.

This particular operator relies heavily on work from other companies and some of the newer Internet-based sources.

But another highly regarded industry veteran has a different opinion, saying that based on his experience, depending on outside marketing comes with some serious concerns.

"Anyone between you and your customer is a broker," he said.

These two contrasting views, each voiced by highly accomplished executives, illustrate a dilemma faced by modern operators as technology and the pace of business advance.

During a period when the

motorcoach industry seems to be running in place, many companies are turning to an increasing number and variety of Internet services that promise to deliver increased business. This comes from more efficiently booking traditional consumers, but also by creating incremental business using digital technology.

Historically, bus operators worked together during busy times. A company might overbook, and then "farm" the excess work to local operators who had spare equipment. The operator that originated the charter would keep a percentage for his or her efforts.

This traditional system has served the industry and the public well. Customers could find coaches, and operators utilized their equipment more efficiently.

The only hiccups came if

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13 ►

## Organization helps bus drivers spot human trafficking

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. — Human trafficking is not something many people want to think about. Yet it exists in everyday places like bus terminals and truck stops, in every state in America.

Human trafficking is modern-day slavery. Traffickers use force, fraud or coercion to compel someone to engage in commercial

sex or forced labor. Anyone who is under the age of 18 and engaging in commercial sex, regardless of the use of force, fraud or coercion, is considered a victim.

Some are as young as 9 years old. Some are adults. Some are transported from place to place so they can never seek help, while others, like Theresa Flores, a survivor

and campaigner against sex trafficking, attended school every day.

Truckers Against Trafficking (TAT) is an organization dedicated to educating truck drivers about human trafficking. As soon as the partnership between TAT and the federally funded Polaris Project national hotline went into effect,

there was a significant increase in the number of calls.

Now, under the umbrella of TAT, a new program, Busing on the Lookout (BOTL), hopes to achieve the same results with the bus industry.

"We have a training video that just became available the beginning of this year," said Annie

Sovcik, program director for BOTL. "We're looking at partnering with bus companies and different busing associations like ABA (American Bus Association) and UMA (United Motorcoach Association), and getting them to help us promote the program and adopt our training for their members.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11 ►

## Some coach operators feeling effects of 'Trump slump'

While international tourism boomed around the globe in 2017, visits to the United States fell markedly. Industry leaders attribute the trend to a "Trump slump" — caused by the belief that foreigners are not welcome here.

Some motorcoach operators who serve key international destinations have felt the impact.

"Some of our international cli-

ents are experiencing the effects of this first hand and as a result we are as well," said Anna Wilkinson, marketing manager for Reston Limousine in Sterling, Va., which serves the Washington, D.C., travel market.

Arrivals from other countries fell 3.9 percent in the first six months of the year, according to the National Travel and Tourism

Office in the U.S. Department of Commerce. Meanwhile, international travel globally grew by 4 percent, the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) in London reported.

The U.S. visitor total of 33.8 million in the first two quarters was about 1.3 million lower than in the first half of 2016. If the U.S. had shared in the 4-percent global

growth rate there would have been a gain of 2.7 million visits.

The U.S. decline is attributed to the current value of the U.S. dollar, which is in a relatively strong position compared with foreign currencies, as well as the Trump administration's policies on immigration and travel from countries that are predominately Muslim.

There is "the feeling by some tourists that they are not welcome," WTCC President Gloria Guevara told the Miami Herald.

"The confusing and convoluted travel bans have done nothing but worsen the country's reputation around the world," travel expert Lee Abbamonte told *Forbes* magazine.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12 ►

### THE RIGHT PRE-OWNED COACH FOR YOUR NEEDS

ALL MAKES & MODELS AVAILABLE  
<https://www.prevcostcar.com/pre-owned>

Contact for more information:

Eloy Torres 817-371-6173 CENTRAL U.S.	Lise Thibault-Prevost 336-995-9063 EAST U.S.	Jim Antonopoulos 336-335-9161 WEST U.S.	Jean Dupont 418-554-5290 CANADA
---	--	---	---------------------------------------



PREVOST

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13 ►

PRESTORT STD  
 US POSTAGE PAID  
 PHOENIX AZ  
 PERMIT NO 1424

Postmaster: Please deliver before or on Mar. 15

# Say 'Yes' To More

## SERVICE OPTIONS

**CUSTOM  
DIGITAL  
GRAPHICS  
AND DESIGN**

**ENGINE AND  
TRANSMISSION  
REPOWER  
SERVICE**

**FLEET  
MANAGEMENT  
SERVICES**

**STANDARD AND  
CUSTOM PAINT**

**8 STRATEGIC  
LOCATIONS  
NATIONWIDE**

**CUSTOMER  
SPECIFIC  
MAINTENANCE  
PROGRAMS**

**COACH  
UPGRADE KITS  
FOR VAN HOO, MCI AND PREVOST**

**OVER 200  
HIGHLY TRAINED  
SERVICE  
TECHNICIANS**



Exclusive U.S. **vanHool** Distributor

[www.abc-companies.com](http://www.abc-companies.com)

844.287.3183

# First-ever joint UMA-ABA Capitol Hill Day set for April

WASHINGTON — The nation's motorcoach operators are effectively doubling down on their legislative efforts in 2018 with the United Motorcoach Association and the American Bus Association holding their first-ever joint Capitol Hill Day lobbying event April 10-11.

Traditionally, each group converges on Capitol Hill at a different time and with slightly different priorities.

But a push by newly elected UMA Board Chair Gladys Gillis for a joint event has given members of both groups the opportunity to work together with the hope of making greater strides toward shared priorities.

"I'd like to see the UMA and ABA legislative agendas come together and have the associations speak with one unified voice," Gillis, owner and CEO of Starline Luxury Coaches, said in an interview with Bus & Motorcoach News shortly after taking office.

UMA President and CEO Stacy Tetschner said it is exciting to be part of the new venture, "bringing together the energy of both our associations. There are so many areas where our legislative goals are aligned that it just makes sense."

Peter Pantuso, president and CEO of the ABA, said the association leadership and staff are excit-

ed about the idea of holding a joint Capitol Hill Day.

"The motorcoach industry has always faced the same issues in Washington, regardless of which association members belong to, and being able to bring those issues to Capitol Hill in a cohesive manner will make this year's event more effective for the membership of both organizations," Pantuso said.

The joint UMA-ABA Capitol Hill Day event is open to members of both organizations and will include a professional legislative briefing for all participants, a group dinner, a customized schedule of appointments with legisla-

tors and a debriefing meeting at the end of the day.

Participants in the event, also referred to as "Fly-in," will have the opportunity to stress to lawmakers that their businesses provide jobs and services in their communities. Members of Congress tend to pay attention when constituents take time to speak out about the realities of operating a business.

Capitol Hill Day is free to attend and operators are only responsible for their hotel room and transportation to and from Washington, D.C.

UMA is requesting that participants book their rooms by March

20 at <https://www.uma.org/capitol-hill>.

Here is the schedule for the event:

#### April 10

- 1:30 p.m.-4 p.m.: Legislative briefing and Capitol Hill instruction at the Homewood Suites
- 6:30 p.m.: Group dinner

#### April 11

- 7 a.m.-8 a.m.: Breakfast and last minute questions and updates at the Homewood Suites
- 8 a.m.-4 p.m.: Individual meetings with U.S. senators/representatives (arranged for you)
- 4 p.m.-6 p.m.: Capitol Hill meeting debrief and reception

## Deadline for music licensing renewals is March 31

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The United Motorcoach Association is reminding its members that it's time to renew their ASCAP and BMI licenses.

The association has negotiated a fee discount for members with ASCAP and BMI, the music industry licensing organizations.

UMA collects the fees and license agreements from members and passes that information and

payments along to ASCAP and BMI. Payments are due by March 31 to receive the discounted licenses through the association.

In order to legally play recorded music on a motorcoach, operators must obtain permission from the license holder.

By playing pre-recorded music (or movies that have music, and virtually all do) to the passengers on a coach, an operator is essen-

tially providing a public performance of that material.

The penalty for playing copyrighted music or showing movies without permission or a license can be stiff.

U.S. copyright law provides that a court can assess damages and require the operator to pay the copyright owner's attorney fees and court costs, as well as enter an injunction against the violator.

A license must be obtained for each coach that plays pre-recorded music or movies with music for passengers.

Renewal forms must be sent to UMA along with a check for payment to arrive no later than March 31. UMA cannot accept a credit card payment for this service since it simply passes along the payment.

UMA members who have not received a renewal form or who

need information about ASCAP and BMI licensing should contact Jocelyn Delacruz at [jdelacruz@uma.org](mailto:jdelacruz@uma.org) or (703) 838-2929.

The ASCAP and BMI licenses only apply to music played on coaches, or the music included in a video presentation.

A video presentation on a coach requires separate licensing, such as that provided by Motorcoach Movies, which also offers a UMA discount.

**IMG**  
International  
Motorcoach Group®  
IMG Partner of the Year!

**PIRELLI**  
TRUCK BUS AGRO OTR

**Motor Coach**  
**TIRE SALES, LLC**

**YOKOHAMA**

**UMA**  
AFFINITY PARTNER

**TOYO TIRES**  
driven to perform®

**TOYO DRIVE TIRES SWEEPING THE INDUSTRY WITH OVER 100 NEW USERS THIS YEAR!**

*I tried to spin the Toyo Drive tires on our first snow day and couldn't. They just gripped the road and the bus took off. They are amazing. Definitely the best gripping tires out there!*

Jesse Schramm, Checker Transport  
Marquette Michigan



For more information contact Bill Kaiser at 678-463-4110 or [bill@motorcoachtiresales.com](mailto:bill@motorcoachtiresales.com)

# THE DOCKET

## Senate confirms Martinez as administrator of FMCSA

WASHINGTON — Raymond Martinez, former chairman and chief administrator of the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission, has been confirmed by the Senate as administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

Martinez replaces acting administrator Daphne Jefferson, who has been heading FMCSA since Scott Darling resigned as administrator in January 2017 when President Donald Trump took office.

Martinez joins FMCSA as it is undergoing an overhaul of its safety performance scoring system and is overseeing the mandate of electronic logging devices on commercial motor vehicles that took effect Dec. 18.

He expressed his support for the ELD mandate during his confirmation hearing last fall.

FMCSA also is reviewing several pending rules affecting the motorcoach and trucking indus-

tries to meet the Trump administration's call for reducing burdensome federal regulations.

FMCSA employs more than 1,000 people in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and its primary mission is to reduce crashes, injuries and fatalities involving large trucks and buses, according to the agency.

Stacy Tetschner, president and CEO of the United Motorcoach

Association, applauded the Senate confirmation of Martinez.

"The safety of our passengers and the nation's traveling public is always our highest priority," Tetschner said. "We stand ready to work with Administrator Martinez and his team to further reduce passenger carrier crashes and improve what is already an outstanding safety record for the industry."

Martinez most recently man-

aged a New Jersey state agency with more than \$1 billion in annual revenue and an operating budget of approximately \$330 million. It is charged with licensing nearly 6 million drivers and the titling, registration and inspection of more than 6 million vehicles.

He previously served as the commissioner of the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles and chairman of the Govern-

or's Traffic Safety Committee as well as deputy chief of staff and special counsel to the New York State Attorney General.

Martinez has twice served on the board of directors of the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators.

Earlier in his career, he served on numerous White House advance teams for domestic and international trips of presidents Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush. During the Reagan administration, he was deputy director for scheduling and advance for First Lady Nancy Reagan and also served as a special assistant at the New York Regional Office of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.



Raymond Martinez

## Regulator commends industry safety

SAN ANTONIO — The country's top motor carrier enforcement officer complimented the motorcoach industry for its recent safety performance but stressed that there is still more work to do.

"Unfortunately we are seeing an upward trend in all crashes, including cars and trucks," said Jack Van Steenburg, assistant adminis-

trator and chief safety officer of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, during the State Association Summit at Motorcoach Expo 2018.

"From 2015 to 2016 the number of fatal crashes involving trucks and buses increased 5.6 percent, from 3,864 to 4,079. Let me dig deeper. Motorcoach fatal

crashes decreased from 34 to 16. I really commend you for your efforts. I am talking to the people who are the experts. You put safety at the top of your business agenda," he said.

"It sounds good but we are one crash away from scrutiny. One major incident is going to roll over

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

## USED COACHES FOR SALE



### Two 2007 GMC Duramax Diesel Mini Coaches

Both have recent wood grain floors, recent paint, PA, DVD player and 2 point seat belts. Both only have 80,000 miles on them. Low miles for the age. Original owner.

Unit #1185 has 28 seats with no rear luggage. Body built by Champion Bus Inc. 2009 model.

Unit #1183 has 27 seats with rear luggage. Body was built by Supreme Corp. 2007 model.

**\$25,000 Each or Best Offer**



### 2008 TD 925 Van Hool

- Seats 79 people
- Cummins engine
- ZF Transmission
- Recent interior but needs a paint job.

**\$125,000 or Best Offer**

Contact Jimmy Hall:  
[jimmy@venturebustours.com](mailto:jimmy@venturebustours.com)  
 or 757-494-1480

**TRANSLITE** BUS GLASS DISTRIBUTORS  
**ENTERPRISES, INC.** SINCE 1993

Proudly Celebrating 20 Years

Bus Glass and Windshield Distributors for  
 Coach, Transit, School, Speciality Vehicles



Same Day Shipping • Customized Fleet Plans • Large Inventory  
 Superb Customer Service • Options for All Budgets

**CALL TODAY!**

800.934.3450 • [www.translitebusglass.com](http://www.translitebusglass.com) • [info@transliteent.com](mailto:info@transliteent.com)

# OTRBs must be charged the same toll fees as transit

WASHINGTON — The Federal Highway Administration has served notice that federally funded tolling authorities must charge over-the-road buses the same fees as public-transit buses for using toll roads or waive the fees where applicable.

In a notice published in the Federal Register, FHWA said changes to federal requirements related to high-occupancy vehicle facilities and the tolling of highways that were included in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act passed by Congress in 2015 must be enforced by tolling agencies that receive federal aid for construction or operation of their facilities.

Tour and charter bus operators have been complaining that many tolling authorities have failed to implement the changes for OTRBs and were charging them higher fees.

In its notice, FHWA reiterated that the FAST Act required "that OTRBs that serve the public be provided access to the toll facility under the same rates, terms, and conditions as public transportation buses."

## Texas eyeing driverless lanes

SAN ANTONIO — Bexar County officials are hoping to someday construct lanes for driverless automated vehicles on the Austin-to-San Antonio section of Interstate 35.

County Commissioner Kevin Wolff said a meeting he had recently in Washington with federal transportation officials about such lanes was positive.

"This is the first proposal of its kind in the nation that I'm aware of," Wolff said. "And when the feds heard about it, they told me, 'This is just the kind of proposal we want to fund.'"

The 95-mile stretch of eight-lane highway, one of the nation's most congested traffic corridors, is already scheduled for an \$8 billion expansion to add four "managed lanes" by 2025.

Wolff wants to make two of those four lanes designed for driverless vehicles — one in each direction from the Williamson County line in far north Austin to downtown San Antonio.

He said he hopes his proposal can tap into an estimated \$200 billion in infrastructure funding that has been proposed by the Trump administration, but that proposal has yet to make it through Congress.

The notice further states that OTRB operators should contact tolling agencies that have failed to implement the changes and request a refund of fees paid since the FAST Act was passed.

"If an OTRB entity believes equal access was not provided by a

covered facility any time after December 4, 2015, that entity should contact the owner/operator of the facility to address this concern," the notice states.

Ken Presley, vice president of legislative and regulatory affairs and industry relations/COO for the

United Motorcoach Association, said the action was good news for the motorcoach industry.

"I could not see any possible way FHWA could interpret the law in the FAST Act any other way and we have said all along that some of the toll authorities would be compelled

to issue refunds," Presley said.

"Regardless, it places the private motorcoach operations on par with subsidized transit to compete for commuter routes. It should also serve as a bridge for our members to work closer with public-transit operations."

## "I've never dealt with a better claims team – top to bottom – than Lancer's."



**Joe Scott**  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Easton Coach  
Easton, PA  
Lancer customer since 2005

"Ninety-nine percent of our company's claims come out of our pocket due to our high deductible, so nothing is more important than minimizing the level of our losses. Lancer knows that, and fights hard to get all our claims settled effectively and efficiently. When there's an accident, Lancer gets to injured parties and their families quickly, in an effort to mitigate a problem from the outset.

Every Lancer representative I have dealt with has had a really good understanding of the situation at hand and the nuances of our business. They also have what I think of as the Lancer style – get right on it, get the facts and try to get it settled for as little as possible."

**If you want fair, proactive claims-handling from a passenger transportation specialist, ask your agent for a Lancer quote or call Lancer directly and get assigned to an agent.**

**To learn more, call 800-782-8902, x3264 or email [bus@lancerinsurance.com](mailto:bus@lancerinsurance.com).**



LANCER

INSURANCE

The Difference is Our Attitude.

370 W. Park Avenue, P.O. Box 9004, Long Beach, NY 11561 | [www.lancerinsurance.com](http://www.lancerinsurance.com)





## Van Steenburg

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

on this industry. We are going to be scrutinized for every little thing we do or don't do," Van Steenburg said.

"That is what happened back in 2011 when we had a series of

crashes. That started the leasing rule and enhanced inspections. I don't want us or you to ever get complacent."

He addressed many topics during his visit, beginning with statistics comparing the safety performance of motorcoach operators to other commercial carriers.

"There were about 28,000 inspections of motorcoaches last year. From those about 7,000 violations were written. The out-of-service rate for motorcoach drivers was 1.9 percent. For truck drivers it was 5.1 percent," he said.

"The vehicle out-of-service rate for motorcoaches was 7.8 per-

cent. For trucks it was 21.2 percent. You are doing something right. Keep it up."

Van Steenburg added that 88 percent of motorcoach compliance reviews last year resulted in satisfactory ratings, eight percent in conditional ratings and one percent in unsatisfactory ratings. He called the remaining review results "outliers" that could not be classified.

He discussed complaints he hears from some operators who believe they are subject to too many inspection visits.

"There are about 2,671 motorcoach carriers registered with us. We have a congressional mandate to do a ratable review once every three years, so for the most part we do 900 a year. Once every three years, whether you need it or not, we are going to be there," Van Steenburg said.

"We do focus on high-risk carriers. There are about 3,000 high-risk motor carriers out there. I can't remember the number of high-risk motorcoach carriers that are out there. It might be less than five. We are not focusing on high-risk motorcoach carriers because there aren't any."

It is important to focus scrutiny on carriers of all sizes due to the passenger volumes they carry, he said. While fleets with 100 or more motorcoaches handle 35 percent of all trips, fleets of one to nine book 27 percent of trips.

Van Steenburg asked operators to give him specific details about abusive practices by commercial vehicle inspectors or unacceptable delays in issuing operating authority to new applicants.

"For years I have heard inklings of certain states doing roadside and weigh station inspections, stretching policy and stretching the law. I would love to hear specifics because we will address them," he said.

Inspectors are not required to find violations, Van Steenburg asserted. "When people say they think we have to go in and find something, that is not true. There is no gotcha. Am I discounting that it may happen? Every inspector is supposed to do things the same way, but there are differences."

If an operator does think a violation is unreasonable, he said, "Please let us know."

Later he added, "It has nothing to do with money. We don't get the

money. It probably goes into the general fund. We are going by what is in the law."

He also addressed complaints about how long it takes for new entrants to get operating authority.

"I hear it takes a while to get operating authority. With our electronic system, we screen every single application of a carrier regardless of what you are applying for. We receive about 48,000 a year. We received 1,757 passenger carrier applications last year. About 400-plus were motorcoach applicants."

The FMCSA computer program searches six years of records for crash histories and commonalities with carriers ordered out of service.

"Most of those applicants are released to go for full operating authority within 72 hours. We only flagged 6 percent to do vetting. Those usually get held up for eight weeks. There are always outliers. If you have concerns, let us know."

FMCSA rejected operating authority applications for 116 carriers last year, including 11 passenger carriers, Van Steenburg said.

The National Registry 2 for driver medical information was scheduled to go live in June 2018 but will be delayed because the federal government is operating under temporary continuing resolutions rather than a final federal budget, Van Steenburg said.

"Now there is a manual process for a driver to register his medical certificate. National Registry 2 automates that for the most part. After a physical the medical examiners will submit by midnight the following day all the medical certificates they have. We will send it to the state licensing agency," he said.

"It is an electronic process. It saves the responsibility on the driver and makes it a lot easier for the state licensing authority because they are not going to get all that traffic, faxes and emails."

However, Van Steenburg said, "We have to allow time for the states to build their databases to be compatible for the national database. I don't think it is going to be practical for the states to have something ready by June."



Jack Van Steenburg



Mobile observation has finally come full circle with the SEE360 camera system from Voyager. This four-camera system gives you a seamless, 360° panoramic view around the entire vehicle. Because each individual camera offers an



unprecedented 190° wide angle view, the SEE360 provides increased awareness on the busiest city streets. Keep your passengers and pedestrians safe while you maneuver your vehicle with confidence.

www.RVCams.com • Toll-free: 877.378.2267 • Tim@RVCams.com

**ARE YOU MOVING?** RETURN TO SENDER UNABLE TO FORWARD NOT SOLICITABLE AT ADDRESS

**Don't miss a single issue!**  
Call **866-930-8421** or email changes to:  
**ebalm@busandmotorcoachnews.com**

## Rural bus transportation conference set for Sept. 30

BRECKENRIDGE, Colo. — The 23rd National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation — with a focus on improving rural, regional and intercity mobility options — has been set for September 30 to October 3 in Breckenridge.

The bi-annual conference, which got its start in 1976 in Greensboro, N.C., will cover hot topics in rural public-transit, tribal and intercity bus operations, highlighting current applied research and best practices.

It will offer cutting-edge training and numerous workshops on bus operations, policy, technology, management and mobility. This year's conference will feature nationally known keynote speaker Donna Griggs presenting on how to manage change.

"We believe this is one of the most important national conferences on rural transportation programs, as we bring in over 450 transit professionals from around the United States," said Elena Wilken, conference co-chair.

"What also makes our conference unique is the fact that included are over 50 transit and motorcoach companies coming together on how to work together to best give the public transportation options," Wilken said.

The conference also includes representatives from the U.S. De-

partment of Transportation, the Federal Transit Administration and several state transportation departments.

Mark Szyperki, president and CEO of On Your Mark Transportation, a consulting firm to the bus and motorcoach industry, said the conference results in interaction between private intercity bus companies and the public-transit agencies.

"I often tell my clients, even if you are not involved in intercity bus scheduled service, this conference is important to attend as it gives you the opportunity to learn from those who are doing scheduled service," Szyperki said. "It also gives you the opportunity to meet federal and state department of transportation professionals who may provide the information you need to consider this important segment of the transportation industry."

The conference includes exhibition space for vendors, including an outdoor exhibition space to display buses and indoor booths for companies to display products such as bus parts, scheduling, ticketing and bus washing.

More information about the conference, including schedules, hotel accommodations and vendors, is available at [www.ribtc.org](http://www.ribtc.org). The conference also is posting information on its Facebook page, [www.Facebook.com/RIBTC](http://www.Facebook.com/RIBTC).

## Legalized pot could cause Canadian border delays

OTTOWA — Legal sales of recreational marijuana, expected to take effect later this year in Canada, likely will result longer waits at border crossings, government officials warned in a declassified document obtained by Global News.

The Canada Border Services Agency document also said that illicit exports of marijuana "are expected to increase" after legalization.

"Unless exemptions are made for personal amounts of marijuana, cannabis legalization may increase workloads for officers and translate into longer border wait times, particularly at land borders," the document said.

Border delays will be particularly bad during summer months as visitors arrive for outdoor festivals and concerts, according to the report by the CBSA's Intelligence Operations and Analysis Division.

A declassified version of the report, "Cannabis Legalization:

Implications for the CBSA and Canada," was obtained by Global News under the Access to Information Act.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's administration, which supports pot legalization, says it is on track to begin in July, but there are some senators who are trying to delay passage of the legislation.

Several Canadian provinces have been developing plans to regulate marijuana once it becomes legal. Ontario passed legislation in December that will regulate the lawful use, sale and distribution of recreational cannabis by the federal government's July 2018 legalization deadline.

Global News reported that the CBSA document indicates the border agency is trying to anticipate such issues as "cannabis tourists" arriving to use marijuana, impaired drivers and travelers carrying small amounts of pot.



## CUSTOM FINANCING

MOTORCOACH • SHUTTLE BUS • VAN

1st Source Bank is a national leader in financing specialty equipment, with more than 40 years of serving individuals and businesses. Our experienced team is ready to provide you outstanding service, straight talk and sound advice.

- Flexible financing options including lines of credit
- Simple application process for aggregate credit up to \$350,000
- Personal service from industry specialists

*Let us tailor your unique financing package.*

Contact Amanda Lundmark  
Cell: 815 953-3623 Office: 574 401-6111  
[lundmarka@1stsource.com](mailto:lundmarka@1stsource.com)

**Source<sup>®</sup>**  
**1st Bank** Member FDIC  
**Specialty Finance Group**

[1stsource.com/shuttlebus](http://1stsource.com/shuttlebus) • [1stsource.com/motorcoach](http://1stsource.com/motorcoach)

**M | B | M | C | A**  
Midwest Bus & Motorcoach Assn.

**ABA**  
AMERICAN BUS ASSOCIATION

**UMA** United Motorcoach Association

# Bibbidi-bobbidi-boo: synergy marketing works like magic

By Christian Riddell  
Motorcoach Marketing Council



I was recently asked to speak at a conference. The request was simple: “Teach them how to land more business without spending as much time and money on marketing.”

At first, I laughed. Let’s be honest; that’s a little like saying: “Teach them how to lose weight while eating more junk donuts and working out less.”

I politely agreed to teach on a totally different subject and moved on. But that request has eaten at me ever since, and not because it was irritating or funny. In this industry, that is the elephant in the room.

Because we are ridiculously busy running our businesses and trying to keep coaches on the road and drivers at the wheels, marketing is the ugly stepsister that keeps getting shoved to the back of the line.

Because I’m an eternal optimist, however, and because I’ve raised my kids on the Disney principles of life where happy endings are always just a few plot turns ahead, I want to solve this issue. I want to help operators sell more while doing less, though that sword in the stone is a tough one to pull out.

But is it really? Maybe the notion isn’t quite as crazy as it may (at first blush) sound. Let’s discuss.

First, the disclaimer: marketing does require some effort, time and resources. I recently taught a

class about guerrilla marketing and one of the key points I shared was that, with any marketing you do, you must choose two of the following: cheap, easy or effective.

You can opt for cheap and easy (but it won’t be effective), go for cheap and effective (but it won’t be easy), or focus on easy and effective (but it won’t be cheap).

The strategy that I am going to talk about today is cheap and effective, but not necessarily easy in the beginning. It will, however, become an autopilot strategy that will pay long-term dividends and fill up your dispatch sheets.

It’s called synergy marketing, and it will transform how you sell.

In its most basic form, synergy marketing is when you find other companies that are targeting the same audiences you are and you work together for the mutual benefit of all partners involved.

This is inherently different than referral marketing, as referral marketing is built around referral fees and almost always has a catch: if someone sends you business, you owe them something.

With synergy marketing, the fact that you are growing together is the point; no money changes hands.

To begin, synergy marketing requires that you answer this question: To whom are you trying to sell? When I ask people this question, I often get “groups” for an answer, though that response isn’t specific enough to be helpful.

But if you identify that you want to sell to more wedding groups, for example, the list of synergy potentials becomes much more clear: every wedding venue, reception center, hotel, caterer,

**Marketing Minute**  
**GoMotorcoach**  
**It’s the Smart Move**

wedding planner, dress shop, photographer and cake decorator becomes a possible synergy partner.

Once you’ve identified some potential partners, it’s time to reach out. This is where the initial investment in time simply can’t be skipped. Now, I am the first to admit, I hate cold calling. Period.

But I have developed a magic recipe for success here. It’s simple and, just like “bibbidi-bobbidi-boo,” works almost every time.

“Hi, this is Chris. I am the director of sales for a transportation company and I realized that you and I are both trying to sell to the same customers. I was wondering if we could get together to see if there was a way that we could work together and maybe send more business your way?”

I know it’s a bit wordier than “abracadabra,” but I promise it’s just as effective. You see, what you said to them was that you want to help them grow their business. Unless they have more business than they know what to do with, or they’re having a really bad day and just got off the phone with the IRS, they will, in all likelihood, be receptive.

So now that they are listening, what do you do next? You set up a face-to-face meeting to figure out if this person/company is doing anything that makes a synergistic relationship a possibility.

Synergy marketing works wonders, but it will fail under a couple of conditions. First, it will fail if

one of the partners is making referrals but not receiving any. It will also die if one partner is not delivering the service that the other can in good faith refer.

Imagine, if you will, that you set up a relationship with a caterer. Then, you tell a bride you’re working with to check out its services. She ends up booking with that caterer, and everyone is happy right up until the entire bridal party gets food poisoning from the chicken salad.

No one wants to take the call from an angry customer about a referral you gave him or her that went horribly wrong.

Bottom line? When you meet with potential partners, it’s important to look beyond surface level excitement to see if the odds are good that they’ll live up to their end of the bargain.

Once you have come to an agreement, you need to have a plan in place. You’ve got to know how you’re going to refer people to them, and also what you plan to give to them to make it easier for them to send referrals to you.

The first half of this is probably where many companies struggle the most because it’s not something that’s a part of our normal sales or order-taking process. In order for this to work, we must start to see ourselves as a resource for our customers.

As we do this, opportunities to refer them to people we work with and share our “trusted vendors and partners” will open up.

As for the second half, we simply must continue to deliver on our end of the bargain. We need to be on time, use quality equipment, be responsive and have drivers who are true professionals. And in the

event that something goes wrong, we must act quickly to make it right.

If we do these things, we can build a robust stable of partners who are using their marketing efforts and dollars to help us grow our business. This effectively allows us to sell more to more people without breaking the bank or investing a whole bunch of time. (See, I told you it was magic.)

There isn’t any one silver bullet in the marketing world. A well-executed marketing strategy includes a lot of different tools and activities. Synergy marketing is one of the few that you could actually build an entire sales program around, and it doesn’t require a great deal of advertising or creativity.

It simply requires a little time, a few pieces of collateral that you can leave with your partners to make it easy for them to refer you, and an honest effort on your part to refer your buyers to your partners as well.

I know it works because I have done it. I also know that, although it sounds simple on paper, there are a lot of moving parts that require massaging and refining over time.

This kind of work takes effort and it isn’t free, but it’s relatively inexpensive and easy and the dividends are worth it.

Selling to end users is good, but being part of a network of companies whose continual referrals help fill your dispatch sheets today, tomorrow and in the future? That really is magic!

For more information about the Motorcoach Marketing Council and its programs, go to [www.motorcoachmarketing.org](http://www.motorcoachmarketing.org).

## How to contact us

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

E-mail: [hmatter@busandmotorcoachnews.com](mailto:hmatter@busandmotorcoachnews.com)  
Mail: 2250 W. Roper Lane  
Cottonwood, AZ 86326  
Call: (602) 284-6049

To subscribe or inquire about your subscription:

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

To advertise: Interested in placing an ad, and new to Bus & Motorcoach News?

Call: Jamie Williams at (352) 333-3393  
E-mail: [JWilliams@naylor.com](mailto:JWilliams@naylor.com)

Existing advertisers, or to submit advertising materials:

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

To contact the United Motorcoach Association:

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

## Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED MOTORCOACH ASSOCIATION

ISSUE NO. 349

### Staff

Publisher, Executive Editor:  
Stacy Tetschner

Editor: Hal Mattern

Sales Director: Johnny Steger

Industry Editor: Ken Presley

Associate Editor: Ellen Balm

Art Director: Mary E. McCarty

Editorial Assistant:  
Maggie Vander Eems

Editorial Assistant:  
Julianne Ryder

### Advisory Board

William Allen  
Amador Trailways  
Sacramento, Calif.

Brian Annett  
Annett Bus Lines  
Sebring, Fla.

James M. Brown Sr.  
Magic Carpet Tours  
Richmond, Va.

Roman Cornell  
ABC Companies  
Orlando, Fla.

Dave Dickson  
Elite Coach  
Ephrata, Pa.

Gladys Gillis  
Starline Luxury Coaches  
Seattle

Bob Greene  
Amaya-Astron Seating  
Omaha, Neb.

John Grzywacz  
CIT Signature Transportation  
Ames, Iowa

Larry Hundt  
Great Canadian Trailways  
Kitchener, Ontario

Dale Krapf  
Krapf Coaches  
West Chester, Pa.

Joan Libby  
Cavalier Coach Trailways  
Boston, Mass.

Marcia Milton  
First Priority Trailways  
District Heights, Md.

David Moody  
Holiday Tours  
Randleman, N.C.

Michael Neustadt  
Coach Tours  
Brookfield, Conn.

Jeff Polzien  
Red Carpet Charters  
Oklahoma City

Tom Ready  
Ready Bus Lines  
LaCrescent, Minn.

Brian Scott  
Escot Bus Lines  
Largo, Fla.

Tim Stout  
Stout’s Transportation  
Ewing, N.J.

Dennis Strief  
Vandalia Bus Lines  
Caseyville, Ill.

Alan Thrasher  
Thrasher Brothers Trailways  
Birmingham, Ala.

Larry Williams  
L.W. Transportation  
Chantilly, Va.

# Good motorcoach drivers make the journey more enjoyable

By Dave Millhouser



On several occasions I've left a job and been replaced by...nobody. In fact, many of you assume that my driving skills have contributed mightily to the current push to develop autonomous vehicles.

Who better than me to empathize with Nick Kokas, vice president of Brentwood's Distinguished Executive Transportation, who was quoted in a recent article in *Limousine, Charter and Tour* magazine about losing business to driverless cars.

"I was not planning on sharing this information publicly, but I've decided to do it in a hope the conversation within our industry changes," Kokas said in the article.

I'm not implying that Kokas has fallen short in any way. Times change, and I, more than most, understand the pain of being supplanted by...nobody.

He has raised the flag on a seri-

ous issue that we might want to get a jump on. Otherwise the conversation he refers to will be with a robot.

Over the years, bus drivers have sometimes been a punch line. Most of us recognize that good ones are tremendous assets and that the mediocre and poor ones are costly in many ways.

But fess up; we've all sorta been attracted to the idea of a driverless bus. Part of that is because it has become increasingly difficult to find and hire good drivers.

Be careful what you wish for -- you may get it. Driverless vehicles are coming and they will certainly alter our business.

A really smart guy would know how. Too bad I'm not smart.

Kokas' point, in part, is that vehicle manufacturers have figured out that they can make more money owning vehicles and selling autonomous transportation than by selling cars. He cautions his colleagues to look past the current Uber phenomenon, which merely uses human drivers more efficiently, to where the industry will be in a couple of years.

He also cautions that it's hap-

pening more quickly than expected.

Many of the current regulatory efforts are aimed at driver quality. The computers operating driverless vehicles are not going to have trouble with background checks or drug tests.

The truth is that we can't, and shouldn't, try and regulate them out of business. Would we be better off if livery stable owners had managed to outlaw cars?

You can imagine that on the transit side this technology will have a massive impact. No need to run big buses where smaller targeted autonomous vehicles can pick up the slack. On the high-density routes, a computerized big bus will be able to do the job.

Relationships are secondary on these trips. (When was the last warm and fuzzy conversation you had with your subway driver?)

In a profound irony, the same drivers we joked about replacing may become our greatest tool in mitigating the effects of automation in the motorcoach business. Good ones develop relationships with customers and are able to

make "mid-course corrections" when an itinerary gets blown up.

A friend was driving a 4106 on an airport run when a gentleman on the bus had a heart attack. Dick detoured to an emergency room, got help, and finished his run. Human intervention likely saved the man's life and made Dick's customers happy.

An autonomous bus would have reached the airport on time, but with a corpse on board. Take that, robot breath.

You can think of lots of stories like this, and it's not too hard to figure out who your good drivers are. Most of the time, they're the ones who get lots of tips. Look around the parking lot for who's driving Cadillacs. Track them down. Clone them.

One thing that the best charter and tour operators have in common is that they aren't really providing transportation as much as offering experiences. The poet T.S. Elliot once wrote, "The journey, Not the destination, matters..."

If you're headed to the emergency room he's wrong, but it's a worthy consideration for most trips.

In ye olden days, I drove high school kids cross-country for a nonprofit organization in ancient buses that failed frequently. One memorable trip ended with the kids being disappointed because we hadn't broken down. All their friends had breakdowns that somehow added to the fun, and this group felt deprived.

I'm not suggesting that, as a marketing ploy, we skip maintenance, but the way our drivers made everything an adventure added to the kids' experience.

Good drivers add value to our customers' experience, and the better we, and they, recognize and develop that trait, the more likely they are to have jobs in the future.

Take heart in the fact that technologies often don't go down their expected path. In 1929, Popular Mechanics touted asbestos as the fabric of the future. Instead of washing your shirt, you blasted it with a blowtorch burning the dirt out.

How'd that work out?  
*Dave Millhouser is a bus industry marketing consultant and freelance writer. Contact him by email at Davemillhouser@gmail.com.*



- ✓ Proudly Serving for 25 Years in the U.S. & Canada.
- ✓ Aftermarket Sales & Service.
- ✓ Customer Satisfaction is our Priority.

SALES REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE U.S. AND CANADA  
 George Farrell  
 Phone: (864) 895 4127  
 email: gfarr007@aol.com

Bob Greene  
 Phone: (402) 639 4454  
 email: bgreene45@cox.net

AMAYA-ASTRON SEATING MEXICO  
 Phone: +52 (55) 5881 2007  
 email: donovan@amaya-astron.com.mx

[www.amaya-astron.com.mx](http://www.amaya-astron.com.mx)



# Battery powered buses are electrifying the industry

SAN ANTONIO — Advances in battery capacity and global commercialization have brought a surge of electrical energy to the bus and motorcoach industry.

At Motorcoach Expo 2017 the vehicle manufacturer BYD displayed what it called “the world’s first 45-foot battery-electric over-the-road coach,” with batteries delivering 200 miles per charge, making it a candidate for commuting and shuttle trips.

Cummins and BAE systems advanced the game at Motorcoach Expo 2018 by exhibiting technology that could take electric technology across the country by combining batteries with fuel cells or matching electric motors in hybrid configurations with diesel or compressed natural gas engines.

With other motorcoach manufacturers working on electric drive trains, the Motorcoach Expo 2019 floor could hold multiple examples of groundbreaking electric technology.

When asked about the arrival of electric motorcoaches during a panel discussion, Roman Cornell of ABC Companies said Van Hool was building an electric motorcoach for shipment to the U.S. this



John O'Brien, a Cummins technical project leader, said the engine company is offering two electric power trains to meet customer needs through battery size, different forms of charging or a range extender option.

summer.

“Van Hool has been building electric buses for a long time so there is nothing new about that to them,” added Louis Hotard, director of technical support at ABC Companies. “All the tech has been done — the issue has been where you get the energy.”

Motor Coach Industries has an electric motorcoach under con-

struction at its facility in Winnipeg.

“MCI has been tracking the requirements and interest in this technology for several years,” said Brent Maitland, vice president of marketing and product planning. “As battery cost decreases, storage increases and the regulatory environment, such as that in California, favors zero emissions, we’ll watch more operators want to

adopt these solutions.”

The Cummins engine display at this year’s Expo held some new big red machines this year — components for its battery electric vehicle (BEV) and range-extended electric vehicle (REEV) systems.

“We will be offering two electric power trains that tailor the power train to meet the needs of the customer through the size of the

battery, through different forms of charging or offering a range extender option,” said John O’Brien, a Cummins technical project leader.

For a full battery-electric system range is dictated by the size of the batteries, O’Brien said. The REEV package carries batteries capable of 84 miles of zero-emissions travel. When the batteries are depleted, a diesel engine generates electricity for ultra-low emissions travel.

“If an operator wants to have a tour bus go into a city and geofence — turn off the engine in a city center or a sensitive area like Yellowstone — we can do that,” O’Brien said. “You size your electric energy storage to handle that part of the duty cycle.”

Cummins is looking at transit and commuter service as its first adopters of the BEV and REEV systems, he said. “We do have some motorcoach customers who are asking about it.”

BAE Systems presented six levels of electrification through module displays at Expo. It identifies those as battery electric, fuel cell, electric-range hybrid, hybrid electric, electric accessories and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11 ►

## UMA Capitol Hill Fly In April 10-11

Legislative briefing  
Group dinner in D.C.

Appointments with legislators  
Debriefing

Head home knowing you made a difference!



JOIN US! Register online!

For more information go to  
[www.uma.org/capitol-hill](http://www.uma.org/capitol-hill)



## Trafficking

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“So far, the response has been really, really positive,” Sovcik said.

Kendis Paris, executive director of Truckers Against Trafficking, said when the organization first started in 2009, there wasn’t much awareness.

“But the trucking industry realized that they could truly be part of the solution,” Paris said. “Truckers could eventually be a global army that will help stop human trafficking. But first, we needed a cultural shift. When people see scantily clad young women in

parking lots they think, ‘It’s just prostitution.’

“We need to change that to, ‘I’m looking at a victim of trafficking.’ The broader cultural shift is when we’re talking about adult victims.

“People think, ‘Well, she could leave if she wanted to.’ We want to help people understand the components of force, fraud and coercion and how traffickers keep their victims compliant and under a psychological hold. These are invisible chains. These people can’t just walk away or ask for help.”

The 30-minute training video on <https://www.truckersagainst->

[trafficking.org/](https://www.truckersagainst-) reviews what the “red flags” are and tells drivers what to do if they see something. BOTL will work with companies on integrating the video, which is also available as a DVD, into their training. More than 500,000 truckers have been trained.

“We want every person in the bus industry, every driver, every terminal employee, to have our free wallet card with them,” Sovcik said.

“The card has the hotline number and reminders of what human trafficking is, what to look for and what information law enforcement needs. We’ll mail it for

free, and we’re working on having an app developed with the same information.

“We are hoping that this information will eventually be included as part of each state’s school bus driver training and that it will count toward the hours of education that they need to drive a bus.”

Paris said that information really makes a difference.

“We just had an email today from a small trucking company based in Kentucky,” she said. “Their driver was in California and helped a young girl at a truck stop who was being trafficked. He’s now being highlighted in their em-

ployee spotlight.

“That girl is so thankful that the driver knew what to do and who to call. This is what happens with a mobile army, and we hope to have the same result in the bus industry.”

For more information about BOTL, go to <https://www.truckersagainsttrafficking.org> and click on the “Programs” tab. The hotline number to report the possibility of human trafficking is 1-888-3737-888 in the U.S. and 1-800-222-TIPS (8477) in Canada. To learn more about Theresa Flores and how she is now helping others, go to: <https://www.traffickfree.com>.

## Electric buses

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

parallel hybrid for motorcoach.

“There is a modular system so a lot of the components are in common,” said Ross Hobson, capability manager of power and propulsion systems.

BAE’s options range from full battery-electric to configurations combining batteries and motors with varying degrees of engine or fuel cell backup. Some options drive the wheels directly off an engine. The engine also may drive an electrical generator that charges

the batteries and drives an electrical motor.

The Van Hool factory in Belgium started working on an electric motorcoach for ABC Companies the week before Christmas, Cornell said.

“For the next few months there will be a process of electrifying it. We will have the vehicle by June or July. We expect it to have 195-mile range. We plan to show it at Expo 2019.”

The global proliferation of battery-powered automobiles and other vehicles will make electric motorcoaches more feasible,

Cornell said.

“The battery technology is what is going to hold the process back. The more batteries that get out there, the more people using them, the costs are going to come down.”

The cost of charging systems also will control the adoption of electric vehicles, he said. “Chargers cost \$50,000 to \$120,000. The range depends on the amperage as well as the number of charging centers.”

Hotard said companies have to have the right operation. “You are never going to go from Jacksonville to Los Angeles. But if you run

shuttles and you can charge for 12 hours that is your gig. You have to have the infrastructure. If you have 15 buses, that is a lot of infrastructure cost for chargers.”

Cornell predicted that financing options for electric coaches could include the investment in battery chargers.

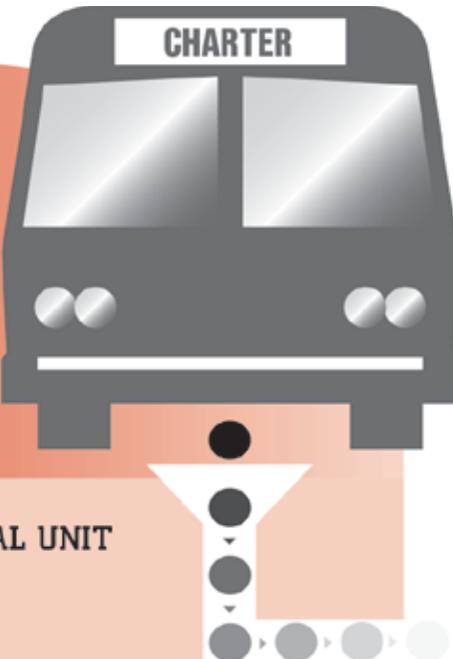
MCI also is assembling an electric motorcoach for the North American market. The prototype is a J4500, which shares architecture with the new D45 CRT LE coach displayed in San Antonio.

“It is planned to enter testing in the first or second quarter of 2018

and production in January 2020,” Maitland said. “The unit is planned to meet rigorous commuter demands of our customers and is planned for highway speeds and the ability to pull grade. MCI’s all-electric development efforts are focused on high-torque and long range to power coaches efficiently at both high and low speeds.”

The MCI coach will benefit from the decades of electric transit coach experience amassed by parent company New Flyer Industries, he said. “In the future, electric will probably be as prolific as diesel technology today.”

# Dump CLEAN... Dump LEGAL!



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

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

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

▲ Washroom waste is removed quickly, easily and safely

## HUDSON RIVER CORPORATION

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

[www.lavdump.com](http://www.lavdump.com)

# infanti™ BUS & COACH UPHOLSTERY

YOUR DESTINATION FOR YOUR COACH INTERIOR NEEDS

 UPHOLSTERY & REFURBISHING	 EMBROIDERY SERVICES - BRANDING	 POWER OUTLETS AND USB PORTS INSTALLATION	 SIGNATURE INTERIOR DETAILING
 COACH FLOORING	 WI FI	 SEAT INSERTS UPHOLSTERY QUICK TURNAROUND	

CONTACT US

	1153 W. Elizabeth Ave. - Linden - NJ - 07036
	Call us: (877) 874 8593
	<a href="mailto:mycoach@infantibusandcoachupholstery.com">mycoach@infantibusandcoachupholstery.com</a>
	<a href="http://www.infantibusandcoachupholstery.com">www.infantibusandcoachupholstery.com</a>

 Infanti Bus & Coach Upholstery	 @infantibuscoach	 infantibuscoachupholstery
--	--	---

## 'Trump slump'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The tourist decline has been felt in the Washington, D.C., area, Wilkinson said.

"For example, one of our clients — a school for international students — has seen a sharp decrease in new students, which has led to the elimination of one of our shuttles to their campus. Though other parts of our business, not internationally related, have remained steady and show a strong outlook, we do feel this shows a disturbing trend."

### Soft travel

Ray Sargoni, president of Gray Line of San Francisco, Silicon Valley and Monterey, said the company is basing its budgets for 2018 on soft foreign travel.

California tourism was devastated by floods early in 2017 and wildfires in the later months, Sargoni said, but declining foreign interest also is believed to have hurt the state's international business.

"That is part of it, but nobody tells you that," he said. "Most of our foreign business comes from Europe and we are hours farther away on this side of the continent, so that affects us a little more."

"I have a friend who lives in Luxembourg and comes to the U.S. every year. He is really upset about the policies (in the U.S.). He decided to spend his money in Russia. He called me and said he had a beautiful time."

The impact of the international tourism decline appears isolated. Although Florida is a top destination for foreign visitors, the slump hasn't been felt in Tallahassee, said Matt Brown, general manager of Astro Travel.

"We do zero dollars in international travel. It may affect the Orlando operators more but I have seen no drop off nor increase in travel requests," Brown said.

Statistics gathered by the National Travel and Tourism Office show great variety in the sourcing of the travel slump. Through the first half of 2017, visits declined 30 percent from the Middle East, 16 percent from Mexico, 14 percent from Central and South America and 2.6 percent from Europe. The WTCC found that travel from Mexico to Canada had grown 53 percent, partly because Canada had ended its visa requirements for Mexicans.

A little more than 8 million Mexicans visited the U.S. from January through June. The Nation-

al Travel and Tourism Office also tallied 6.5 million visitors from Europe and 16.4 million from other countries categorized only as "overseas."

### Canadian travelers

The first half of the year went well for American destinations favored by Canadians. Visits from the north totaled 9.5 million, a 4.8 percent gain.

Maclean's, a national magazine based in Toronto, recently reported that politics and their wallets influence Canadians.

"Many Canadians have decided to take a pass on the U.S. for at least four years," the story began. "When President Donald Trump enacted his unilateral, nasty, morally-dubious travel ban targeting Muslim-majority countries, the Internet's collective, well-meaning, morally sound response was to turn the tables on Trump and the country that elected him president ... banning their own cross-border travel was, for several reasons, the right thing to do."

On the other hand, Maclean's continued, "In the grand tradition of Canadian frugality, we plan our travel relative to the strength of the loonie. When our dollar is stronger, border lines grow. When it's

weaker, Buffalo's outlet malls have empty parking lots."

International travel generated \$1.5 trillion in economic activity in the U.S. in 2016, according to the SelectUSA, a program of the Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration. That was 2.7 percent of gross domestic product.

A typical overseas visitor stays 18 nights and spends \$4,360, according to the association U.S. Travel, which says international tourism directly supports 1.2 million jobs and \$32.4 billion in wages.

International arrivals dropped 1.3 percent the month after the Trump administration announced a ban on travel from some countries in January. When Trump made a second effort in June to limit visits from some countries arrivals declined 2.8 percent the following month.

### Pre-Trump slump

Some travel officials are hesitant to blame the slump entirely on Trump. Roger Dow, president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association, told USA Today that the decrease in international travel began in 2015, before Trump was elected.

Dow attributes that to economic and political forces in Europe,

the largest contingency of travelers to the U.S.

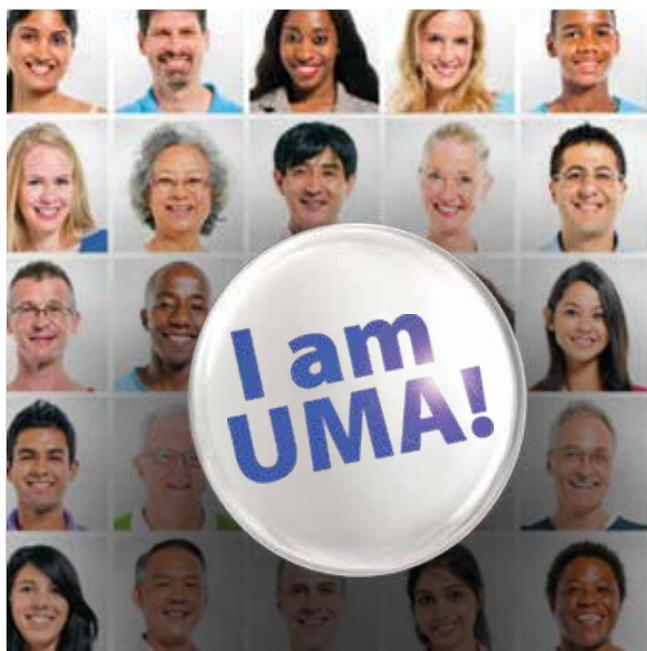
But a survey conducted early this year found that 47 percent of corporate travel managers in Europe believe Trump's policies would reduce travel to the U.S. The survey, conducted by the Global Business Travel Association, determined that 37 percent of U.S. corporate travel managers agreed.

Such concerns prompted Discover Los Angeles, that region's tourism board, to launch measures reminding potential tourists that California is diverse and welcoming. Officials at the organization said Los Angeles County received 47.3 million visitors in 2016, setting a new record for the sixth consecutive year.

But they warned that U.S. policies could deter 800,000 international visits to Los Angeles over the next three years, costing the area \$736 million in direct spending.

"Whenever I meet people traveling, everyone says something about (the U.S.) and nothing is positive," New Zealand-based travel blogger Liz Carlson told Forbes. "My friends who have traveled there recently are worried about the rules where the Transportation Security Administration can look through your phones or laptops."

# Operators Count on UMA



**The United Motorcoach Association has been on the side of the independent bus and motorcoach operator since 1971 and members benefit from programs, services and discounts that support you in running your business.**

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

Free BOC-3 Process Agent Service

Michelin Advantage Tire Discount Program

Bus & Motorcoach Academy

Regulatory Guidance

Motorcoach Minute Podcasts

Motorcoach EXPO

BusRates.com

Fuel DISCOUNT Program

Workers' Compensation Program

Expert On-Call Staff

Safety Management Seminar

Effective Advocacy

Driver Member Programs

And much more ...

Visit [www.uma.org](http://www.uma.org) to learn more about all your member benefits.



UNITED MOTORCOACH ASSOCIATION

## Bus brokers

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

companies didn't pay each other promptly, or provided inferior service on work they picked up. In a tight-knit industry, word spread quickly enough that bad actors often were weeded out before they did significant damage.

Some operators thrived on overbooking, consistently accepting more work than they could service with their own coaches and building a network of operators willing to accept what amounted to "pre-packaged" business. This is true for both the charter and line-haul segments of the industry.

Scheduled-service companies traditionally do this on holidays and other times of peak demand.

Charter operators rely on it for major events. Frequently a major player in a market would contract to provide far more transportation than its fleet could handle, and then book and coordinate other companies. If the event were large (like the Olympics) the company would hire equipment and drivers from distant cities.

These types of arrangements often worked well, sometimes did poorly, and occasionally failed in spectacular fashion. Failure took the form of either poor service or



Shofur is one of a few bus brokerage companies that have expended some effort to build relationships with motorcoach operators.

operators not getting paid.

Also in the mix were tour companies that owned no equipment. They would put together itineraries, sell seats retail and then charter buses to handle the transportation.

One steroidal form of failure happened on occasions when a bus line, tour company or, later on, website broker negotiated a low price for work then withheld payment. When the operators asked for their money, they were told they could be

paid now at a further discounted rate or wait weeks or months for full payment — this despite the fact that the consumer had paid for the transportation long before.

Examples linger in the industry's institutional memory, making some operators cynical when "brokers" are mentioned.

With the dawn of the digital age it became simpler to offer pure brokerage services, and maintain a visible presence nationwide, while

owning few, if any, coaches. A group leader could find a website, click on any city and shop for charter transportation without having any direct connection to the actual operator until the bus showed up.

Often customers had no idea they were not dealing directly with a coach company. One gentleman referred to his brokerage site as a "value-added reseller" offering customers one-stop shopping for charters, and operators pre-pack-

aged work they might otherwise not have gotten, or even known about.

The perils of brokered work for both the customer and the bus company are virtually the same as when work was "farmed" from other operators, but compounded by the anonymity of the process.

Tour operators fall into a middle ground. They add value in ways that simple websites don't. They sell retail, create itineraries and often make deposits on rooms and event tickets. They have a relationship with their customers and real skin in the game.

Conversely, in competitively packaging tours one incentive is to cut transportation costs. Many negotiate price aggressively. Some reward quality, others don't care.

The fact that they have capital tied up is a two-edged sword for their coach suppliers. Tour operators are a buffer with the passengers and do generate business, but if they sell too few seats on a tour or are generally under-capitalized, they are tempted to ask bus companies to pay for the tour broker's sins.

It is important to remember that they work for their customers, not the coach operator.

Of the nine websites offering brokered bus transportation con-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14 ►

## Our industry's future is bright!

**UMA MOTORCOACH EXPO 2019**  
JANUARY 6-10, 2019

# Get ready!



Ft. Lauderdale, FL

[www.motorcoachexpo.com](http://www.motorcoachexpo.com)

## RELATIONAL BUS SYSTEMS

### Charter & Tour Software

**g<sup>o</sup>Chart**  
Charter Management System

**g<sup>o</sup>Tour**  
Tour Management System

**g<sup>o</sup>Chart:** Features include customer and contract management, vehicle inventory, scheduling and dispatch, accounts receivables, and numerous accounting and operations reports. Additional modules include: Prophecy Mileage and Routing, g<sup>o</sup>Mile (IFTA reporting), Driver Duty (payroll and time management), Email, Advanced Accounting and Advance Dispatch management and reporting; and more!

**Web Manager Module:** Provides online credit card processing, integrated quote requests, online access to Drivers' schedules and other custom g<sup>o</sup>Chart data access via the web.

**Data Backup and Recovery:** Remote services includes daily, scheduled backup of RBS data files over a secure connection.

**g<sup>o</sup>Tour:** Our browser based tour management system designed specifically for the motorcoach industry. Manages reservations, itineraries, receivables, payables, produces management reports and escort, driver and customer documents for group and retail tours. Real time, fully integrated credit card processing is available using a secure and reliable gateway service. Accessible from any computer with internet access. Hosted at RBS secure data facility. RBS professional staff manages server hardware and software and performs all updates and daily backups.

**New release coming soon!**  
Visit [www.rbs2000.com](http://www.rbs2000.com) for the latest news, timeline, features, and more related to g<sup>o</sup>Tour version 3.

Call us today at 1-800-448-7001 or visit [www.rbs2000.com](http://www.rbs2000.com) to request an evaluation of g<sup>o</sup>Chart or g<sup>o</sup>Tour

**RBS** Relational Bus Systems

[www.rbs2000.com](http://www.rbs2000.com)

# School district names career center after Dan Dipert



Dan Dipert

ARLINGTON, Texas — Dan Dipert, founder of Dan Dipert Coaches, is the namesake of a new technical center opened

by the Arlington Independent School District.

The Dan Dipert Career and Technical Center, which offers state-of-the-art courses in career and technical fields to all district high schools, was officially dedicated last month during ceremonies attended by city, school and state officials.

Dipert, a member of the United

Motorcoach Association and one of Arlington's most well-known business leaders and philanthropists, has been active in the community and especially in education since moving his family there in 1964.

He previously served two terms on the AISD Board of Trustees.

Dipert was a youth minister at First Baptist Church when he moved to Arlington. In 1972, he left the church, purchased a small travel agency from a local bank and turned it into a multimillion-dollar travel and tour business that is now one of the most respected motorcoach operations in the United States.

During the dedication ceremony for the career center, Arlington

Mayor Jeff Williams noted that the Dipert family formed the Dan Dipert Family Fund to benefit Arlington causes and currently supports the AISD Education Foundation.

"And the Arlington ISD Dan Dipert Career and Technical Center will further build on the dream that Dan Dipert has for all students of AISD, and his legacy will be experienced by generations to come," Williams said.

Texas State Representative Chris Turner said that whether it is Dipert's leadership in business, education or the nonprofit arena, "I think the question that drives Dan Dipert's generous spirit is not just how do I give back, but also how

do I create more opportunity for others to be successful, and there is no better way to create those than to create those opportunities and to support public education."

"It is his passion. I would go so far as to say that if every school district in the state of Texas had a patron saint like Dan Dipert, our state would be a lot better off," Turner said.

The 169,800-square-foot center accommodates 4,800 students every two days in programs such as animation, architecture, automotive, biomedical science, broadcasting, cosmetology, construction, culinary/hospitality, engineering, entrepreneurship, Fire Academy, graphic design,

health sciences, horticulture, information technology, law enforcement, photography, precision manufacturing and welding.

Dipert's philanthropic activities aren't focused only on education. He also was the lead donor for the Dan Dipert Student Welcome Center at the University of Texas at Arlington and the Dipert Family Chapel at Health South Arlington Memorial Hospital.

The University of Texas at Arlington and the Dallas/Fort Worth Chambers of Commerce awarded him the Mid-Cities Entrepreneurial Achievement Award in 1995, and he received the Star Award from the Arlington Chamber of Commerce in 2015.

## Bus brokers

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

tacted for this article, only three — Rally, Ground Charters and Shofur (*Rallybus.net*, *Groundcharters.com* and *Shofur.com*) — responded with anything beyond an automated reply.

It's worth noting that these three companies each have expended some effort to build relationships with coach operators.

Recognizing the genre's checkered history, the general manager of Ground Charters pointed out that they do work for the customer, but consider coach operators a valued resource and are always transparent regarding who is actually operating the buses.

"We're good brokers," she said, indicating that she understood the industry's fear of "bad" ones.

In recent years, new technology has ramped up the Internet's ability to book, and even create,

business. Crowdsourcing software allows certain sites to assemble groups of individuals interested in attending the same event or to create commuter routes by connecting people who make similar daily treks to work.

Some have characterized it as the motorcoach version of Uber. That's not a precise comparison, but in the right ballpark. In many cases customers are folks who weren't previously using, or even considering, buses, so this is incremental business.

Local transit operators have, for years, offered on-demand service where practical, so in some ways crowdsourcing is evolution as much as revolution.

As these systems are refined, and new ones are developed, operators who have idle equipment or don't have an affinity for marketing have an incentive to work with them.

When considering if, and how

much, to get involved with these new services, there are a number of considerations.

The traditional litany of caveats remains relevant. Are they going to pay a reasonable price? (Or is the "broker" going to treat transportation as a commodity and contract the lowest bidder without regard to quality?) Mark Twain once said, "History does not repeat itself, but it sometimes rhymes."

Are they going to pay in advance, or at the time of pickup? Why not? They already have the customer's money. It's worth noting that at least one large crowdsourcing site has, so far, consistently paid operators in advance.

There have been instances when customers thought they were booking luxury coaches with amenities and didn't get them because the broker didn't order, pay for or guarantee them. On occasion the customer finds it difficult to find anyone to talk to, let alone get relief.

In some ways the process is like buying a house, but in reverse. In this case the broker is working for the customer. There's nothing wrong with that, but everyone involved should be aware it is the case.

At least one crowdsourcing website (*Rally.com*) has been represented at a number of industry meetings, building relationships with carriers and making the effort to address their concerns and needs.

There are a few other things to consider. If a bus line, website or broker proves to be reliable, you still have to determine how much of your fate you are willing to put in its hands. Are you willing to abandon marketing entirely and allow an outside entity to book all your work (and thus control your destiny)?

Bear in mind that tour operators and brokers have come and gone, and may evolve in either direction, so it's important to monitor the relationship. It can be in-

structive to look up reviews on the Internet.

One potential pitfall of crowdsourced charters is that, even though passengers are all going to the same event, you may not be transporting a true "affinity group." There is no group leader to smooth the way. All football fans are not the same.

Alternatively, working with these sites offers the opportunity to turn a small charter into a larger one. A small group of people wanting to travel to an event has the chance to attract additional participants, generating more business.

A second alternative is to build relationships with your clientele, pursuing business on your own, and use the Web services only to fill slow spots. Clearly, this method gives more control, but you incur the expenses associated with marketing and sales.

At least there's no one between you and your customers. If you have drivers who are popular and frequently requested, that's a consideration.

One industry observer pointed out a variation of this strategy. Some operators consciously avoid brokered work. They feel that, with the exception of crowdsourcing, it often just moves existing business from one carrier to another in a race to the bottom price.

These companies cede that work to rivals, then chase value-driven clientele, allowing competitors to wallow in low margins.

A brokered charter generally does not afford the coach operator the opportunity to win the customer permanently via superior service because the client's communication has been with the broker.

A third variation is to recognize that nothing prevents a coach line from developing or buying software that does regional crowdsourcing. Find or create your own incremental business. Virtually every sched-

uled-line operator is doing online booking, with the efficiency that comes with that process.

Consider Uber. There was nothing to stop traditional taxi operators from doing the same sort of thing as Uber. Versions of the technology that makes Uber consumer friendly could have, and probably should have, been developed by cab companies years ago.

They chose not to because they were in a protected market and saw no need. They're currently fighting a holding action just to survive. Paraphrasing Pogo, they have met the enemy, and it is them.

Marketing has not been a traditional strength of the motorcoach industry. In order to do well in the current environment, we need to put more energy and thought into that phase of the business. At some point Internet sales and marketing will impact each operator either directly or competitively. If you don't control it, it will control you.

One size doesn't fit all, and each operator will decide for itself where it fits along a "marketing continuum" that extends from complete digital dependence to total self reliance (depending on customer relationships to bring enough business to thrive).

Bear in mind that along with game-changing innovation a lot of ideas have come and gone. You may not be able to see the future or pick a winner every time, but you will want to carefully monitor the things you try.

Each company should know its strengths and weaknesses and make considered choices about what percentage of their sales and marketing they outsource based on their own skills, resources and vision.

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

## FOR SALE

Amaya seats out of a 2011 Van Hool C2045. All leather seats with aircraft style tray table on the back of each seat. 11 are doubles with cup holders in the middle of both seats. 9 are single with a single cup holder on the side. Does not include mounting nuts and bolts.

**\$5,500 or Best Offer**

Contact Jimmy Hall: [jimmy@venturebustours.com](mailto:jimmy@venturebustours.com) or 757-494-1480



## Low Miles Preowned Coach

- ~ 46102 2008 C2045
- ~ Cummins/Allison
- ~ 57 Passenger
- ~ Rear Window
- ~ Only 390k miles
- ~ Stainless steel inserts
- ~ 6 monitors & much more

**Call Lance to make the deal of a lifetime!**  
**214-208-1745**



**150+**  
SERVICE FACILITIES

**55** MOBILE SERVICE TRUCKS

PARTS, ANYTIME, ANYWHERE.  
— WE MAKE IT EASY! —

**24<sup>HR</sup>**  
SERVICE

ACROSS  
USA &  
CANADA

**WE SERVE EVERY  
BUS BRAND YOU OWN**

**7** DAYS  
A WEEK



**18**

REGIONAL  
SERVICE  
MANAGERS



**14**

SERVICE  
CENTERS



**15 PROFESSIONAL TRAINERS**  
AVAILABLE TO TRAIN YOUR TECHNICIANS



**THERE ARE A NUMBER OF THINGS  
TO LOVE ABOUT  
OUR SERVICE NETWORK.**

**PREVOST.**  
THE ULTIMATE EXPERIENCE

NOVABUS

PREVOST



prevostcar.com

Supported by the PreVost Parts & Service network.

# This puts coach travel in a whole new light



## The 2018 MCI® J4500. Discover the beauty within.

Cue the lights. Bring on the ambiance. When it comes to wowing passengers, the 2018 MCI J4500 has the inside track. With a newly redesigned interior, the J4500 features more beautiful lighting throughout, including programmable variable LED color lighting that can bathe the cabin in the hue of your choice. And now, with the most floor space in the industry, the J4500 offers the best-in-class legroom and seating for up to 60 passengers. Factor in the model's low total cost of operation, its more spacious and functional driver cockpit and a rear window option, and you've got a coach that's truly ready to impress.

Get Enlightened.

Visit [J4500-enlightened.com](http://J4500-enlightened.com)

