

# Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

## Decline in new operators complicates used-coach market

The lack of new carriers entering the motorcoach industry has shifted the market for some used vehicles, but the healthy and growing operators continue to absorb the late-model, gently pre-owned coaches on dealer lots.

"In recent years, we have seen the number of small bus operators and new entrants decrease given new regulatory requirements, making entrance more onerous, as well as a regional consolidation of operators," said Patrick Scully, vice president of sales and marketing at Motor Coach Industries.

Those factors, Scully said, have resulted in "a decrease in this buying segment for pre-owned coaches."

Mike Laffan, senior vice president for East Coast sales at ABC Companies in Camden, N.J., said it is no longer an easy process for new entrants to get through the U.S. Department of Transportation application process.

"Insurance also is a factor in stopping people from entering this business," Laffan said. "It is very expensive."

As a result, he said, "When I started working in this business in 2000, there would be 20 people per week coming into our office to open a bus company. They had their DOT authority and were ready to go. Today, if we see two a month we are lucky. Walk-in business has dwindled to almost zero."

Sales of used motorcoaches also have been diminished by carrier consolidations, Laffan said.

"There are a lot of roll-ups of the small carriers who operated 10 or 12 buses. They are being bought by people who are buying new buses. New bus sales are great," he said.

Dave Millhouser, a veteran of the motorcoach industry and a columnist for Bus & Motorcoach News, said the industry seems to be shrinking, and the people dropping out are the ones who buy used coaches.

"The little guys have historically bought coaches from the big guy," Millhouser said. "The bus industry's business model is based on stable used-bus prices. If you look at the manufacturers who are currently successful, one thing

they have in common has been their commitment to the resale value of their products."

If inventories of used coaches rise, a leader in the finance industry said, this trend could affect the important role of trade-in values in determining the financing costs of

new motorcoaches.

"Sales of new coaches have been very healthy recently," he said. "I always have concerns when you start to hear that the used motorcoach inventory is rising. That obviously is going to affect values."

"The manufacturers have this issue in the front of their minds. They need to continually address it"

That is part of MCI's commitment to its customers, said Mitch Guralnick, vice president of pre-owned coaches.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13 ►



**Sen. John McCain** had three Coach Quarters' executive day coaches at his disposal during his 2008 presidential campaign. He nicknamed each of them the "Straight Talk Express." See Coach Quarters story on Page 14.

## NCAA sticks with GoGround inspections

INDIANAPOLIS — The National Collegiate Athletic Association will not be deterred from using a third party to certify motorcoach charter operators for championship travel.

Leaders of the country's largest motorcoach operator associations met with NCAA travel administrators recently to discuss industry concerns about working with GoGround, which charges fees as a prerequisite for inspections and certifications for charters to national tournaments.

Last July, NCAA announced a five-year extension of its contract with the GoGround transportation management company. The GoGround program, STATS Certified (Safe Transport of Athletes, Teams and Students), has been controversial since it was instituted in 2011.

NCAA administers 90 championships in 24 sports for member colleges and universities. It coordinates and pays for team transportation to those playoffs. NCAA does not cover sports travel during conference seasons when each school makes charter arrangements independently.

At the February 18 meeting, NCAA officials "made it very clear that outside certification was their requirement and they do not see that they will remove that in the foreseeable future," said Bronwyn Wilson, president of the International Motorcoach Group.

NCAA officials explained that their role in post-season travel arose after a 2007 accident involving a college team, when they learned that some motorcoach operators had not undergone U.S. Department of Transportation in-

spections for five or more years.

Before 2010, each school arranged for its own championship travel.

"They said the current minimum standards of FMCSA (Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration) were not enough to satisfy their requirements and feel an obligation to their athletes and athletes' parents to ensure higher levels of safety," said Stacy Tetschner, president and CEO of the United Motorcoach Association. "They feel they meet that requirement with the STATS certification."

The industry also was represented at the meeting by Peter Pantuso, president of the American Bus Association, and Tom Bazow, a Trailways executive board member and president of Excursion Trailways in Ft. Wayne, Ind.

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**Larry and Lorna Hundt** of Great Canadian Holidays & Coaches received the Meritorious Service Medal from Canadian Governor General Julie Payette (center) during a ceremony in Toronto. See story on Page 14.



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# Younger generations are crucial to business longevity

SAN ANTONIO — Understanding generational differences in beliefs and values is a key to successful interactions with employees, customers and the children who may run a business in the future, a Seattle consultant told motorcoach operators during UMA Motorcoach Expo 2018.

“A lot of times when we think about other generations, we find it extraordinarily frustrating,” Tara Smith, managing partner of Crux Consulting, said during in the Expo session “Bridging Generational Gaps.”

“We need to understand that our generational experience is a very human response to our original reference points,” Smith said. “It shapes everything we think.

“It is not about being wrong or right. Different generations have different perspectives. We are looking at helping you lead and motivate your employees and tap into the younger generations,” she said.

Broad personality traits have been assigned to generations stretching from the early decades of the 20th century to the first generation of the 21st century, she said.

“These personalities are not true of every person in every situation. We are complex and also are influenced by geography, race, gender, our industry and our individual personalities,” Smith said.

“You are you, but the chances are pretty good that something about this generational framework shows up in your life and relationships.”

Our generation is shaped by the world that existed as we grew up, she said.

“That is your original reference point. Our early experiences tells us what we think is normal. It is easier to lower our judgment if we realize that we would likely have a similar world view if we had been

born with similar experiences.”

Members of the baby boom generation, born from about 1945 to 1964, are perfectly suited to work in the motorcoach industry, Smith said.

“They are hard workers. Their careers play essential roles in their lives. Their career gives them their identity and sense of self. They are workaholics in a 24/7 industry.”

Generations following the boomers have been confronted with more choices and different challenges.

“Generation X was born from 1965 to 1979. They are comfortable with authority and will work as hard as needed because work/life balance is very important,”

Smith said.

“They watched the ways that their parents’ work impacted their family and that reflects a different relationship in the employee/employer contract.”

While boomers may think Gen Xers are job-hoppers, she said, “The older generations are working longer so the younger generations are leaving jobs due to a lack of leadership opportunities.”

Generation Y, born from 1980 to 1994, is known as the millennial generation and is less influenced by authority and over-hard work.

“Their respect must be earned. They are extremely technology savvy and goal- and achievement-oriented,” Smith said.

“Millennials have an allergy to ‘This is how we have done it.’ They want you to listen to new ideas and create flexibility. This is a much more culturally diverse group. They have allergies to issues of race and gender. Being ‘green’ and socially responsible is important.”

Members of Generation Z, born beginning in 1995, will be entering the work force if they are not there already. “Their traits are still to emerge,” Smith said.

She advised current business leaders to consider “the generational lens from the perspective of your employees and customers. The math is clear — a younger generation of people at some point will be leading your company if you want to have a company that has a lifespan that exceeds your personal career.

“The millennials outnumber the baby boomers. Their cultural footprint is very large. See if there are any places where your audience doesn’t align with the design you have.

“We have to figure out how to respond to the generations in our workplace. Look for places where you have blind spots.”

## IMG releases 2018 travel guide

The International Motorcoach Group has released its 2018 Travel Resource Guide, an industry planning tool for travel and meeting planners.

“At trade shows, customer visits and in conversation with individuals we hear how valuable this publication is,” said IMG President Bronwyn Wilson. “We know

that this publication is not only useful but brings value and opportunities to IMG member companies.”

The publication, distributed to more than 15,000 businesses, features an easy-to-use layout and information important in the planning process such as facility locations, vehicle types and sizes,

and the key contacts at the 56 companies that make up the IMG network.

In addition to the print version, IMG’s Travel Resource Guide can be accessed in electronic format at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ckjf1HgVoizxyWEcPu9MZzsQ0cZCeAV/view?usp=sharing>.

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# THE DOCKET

## New FMCSA leader Martinez sworn in by Chao CVSA names crash analysis director

WASHINGTON — Raymond Martinez has officially taken over as the sixth administrator for the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao swore Martinez into office in a recent ceremony.

“Ray’s years of experience promoting traffic safety at the state level, as well as his knowledge of the commercial motor vehicle industry, will help FMCSA fulfill its critical mission of improving truck and bus safety,” Chao said.

Martinez most recently served eight years as the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission’s chairman and chief administrator, where he oversaw the agency’s 2,500 employees and a \$330 million annual operating budget with more than \$1 billion in annual revenue.

He advised the governor and state legislature on all areas of motor vehicle transportation and traffic safety and was responsible for developing the agency’s regulatory and legislative agenda and all project prioritization.

“It’s an honor and privilege to serve my fellow Americans in this capacity and, under Secretary Chao’s leadership, I look forward to working with all commercial vehicle stakeholders to effectively reduce the number of truck and bus crashes on our nation’s roads,” Martinez said.

Martinez is a former commissioner of the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles, and also served at the U.S. Department of State.

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



Raymond Martinez, pictured with his wife, Marin Gibson, was sworn in as the sixth administrator for the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration by U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao (right).

## CVSA names crash analysis director

GREENBELT, Md. — Scott Hernandez joined the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance as director of crash standards and analysis.

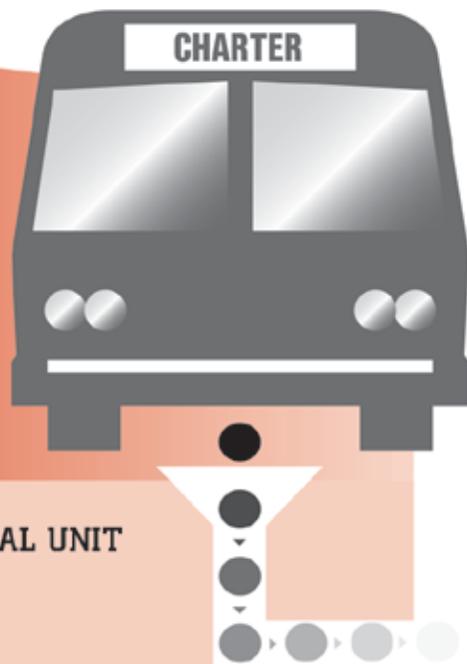
Hernandez has more than 30 years of experience as a member of law enforcement with the Colorado State Patrol.

He specializes in accident reconstruction with training in commercial motor vehicle crash investigation.

He holds Level 4 Accident Reconstruction Certification and completed the Commercial Vehicle Crash Inspection Course through the Florida Highway Patrol.

Hernandez serves as the primary resource on CMV crash reduction efforts, issues and programs.

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# Industry coalition pushing bill to reduce CDL delays

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The Commercial Vehicle Training Association and a coalition of 20 transportation-industry groups are urging congressional leaders to support a bill that would reduce delays faced by applicants seeking commercial driver's licenses.

In a letter sent to House Speaker Paul Ryan and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, CVTA President and CEO Don Lefevre said delays in getting appointments to take the CDL skills test "are preventing individuals from entering the workforce expeditiously at a

time when drivers are in short supply."

Twenty industry trade associations, including the United Motorcoach Association, signed the letter.

Reps. John Duncan, R-Tenn., and Steve Cohen, D-Tenn., intro-

duced the bipartisan bill, H.R.4719.

"Trucking, motorcoach, and school bus industries are all facing severe driver shortage issues," the letter states. "As a coalition of trade associations and employers concerned with America's growing commercial vehicle driver

shortage, we urge you to sponsor and support H.R.4719."

Here is the full letter:

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi:

As a coalition of trade associations and employers concerned with America's growing commercial vehicle driver shortage, we urge you to sponsor and support H.R.4719.

Congressmen John Duncan, R-Tenn., and Steve Cohen, D-Tenn., introduced this bipartisan legislation to reduce delays faced by applicants seeking a commercial driver's license (CDL).

These delays, commonly referred to as "skills test delays," are experienced by CDL applicants seeking an appointment for the CDL skills exam where they must demonstrate their ability to drive a truck or bus.

Since a CDL is required for an individual to begin working as a commercial motor vehicle operator, these delays are preventing individuals from entering the workforce expeditiously at a time when drivers are in short supply.

Trucking, motorcoach, and school bus industries are all facing severe driver shortage issues. The trucking industry is experiencing a tremendous driver shortage expected to have reached 50,000 by the end of 2017 and could grow to more than 174,000 by 2026 on its current trajectory.

Eighty-five percent of motorcoach companies report that they have difficulty recruiting drivers. Private school bus operators report the difficulty in finding drivers as their number one concern.

Contributing to this problem are the significant delays in many states to completing CDL testing. According to the GAO, CDL applicants in 15 states face delays of two weeks or more from the time they are eligible to test until the test is actually taken.

This is the result of the inability of states to keep up with demand for CDLs due to the lack of examiners, testing facilities, and other resources necessary for an efficient testing process. CDL applicants suffer significant consequences because they are being delayed from earning income since they cannot begin work without a CDL.

Many CDL applicants are not in a financial position to wait extended periods of time to take a licensing exam upon which their careers depend. Our companies also depend on acquiring and retaining top driving talent to safely keep up

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

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# TSA offers programs, guidance on homeland bus security

WASHINGTON — Terrorism threats are not a major issue for bus operators, but the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) still is offering programs and information on the topic to make sure operators remain

vigilant.

“The threat to buses in the homeland remains low,” TSA official Rochelle Johnson said during a recent conference call on bus security for industry officials.

David Cooper, industry en-

gagement manager for the TSA, said the agency plans to update its vehicle ramming attack guidance in May and will distribute it to the bus industry.

He said First Observer Plus, a security/domain awareness-train-

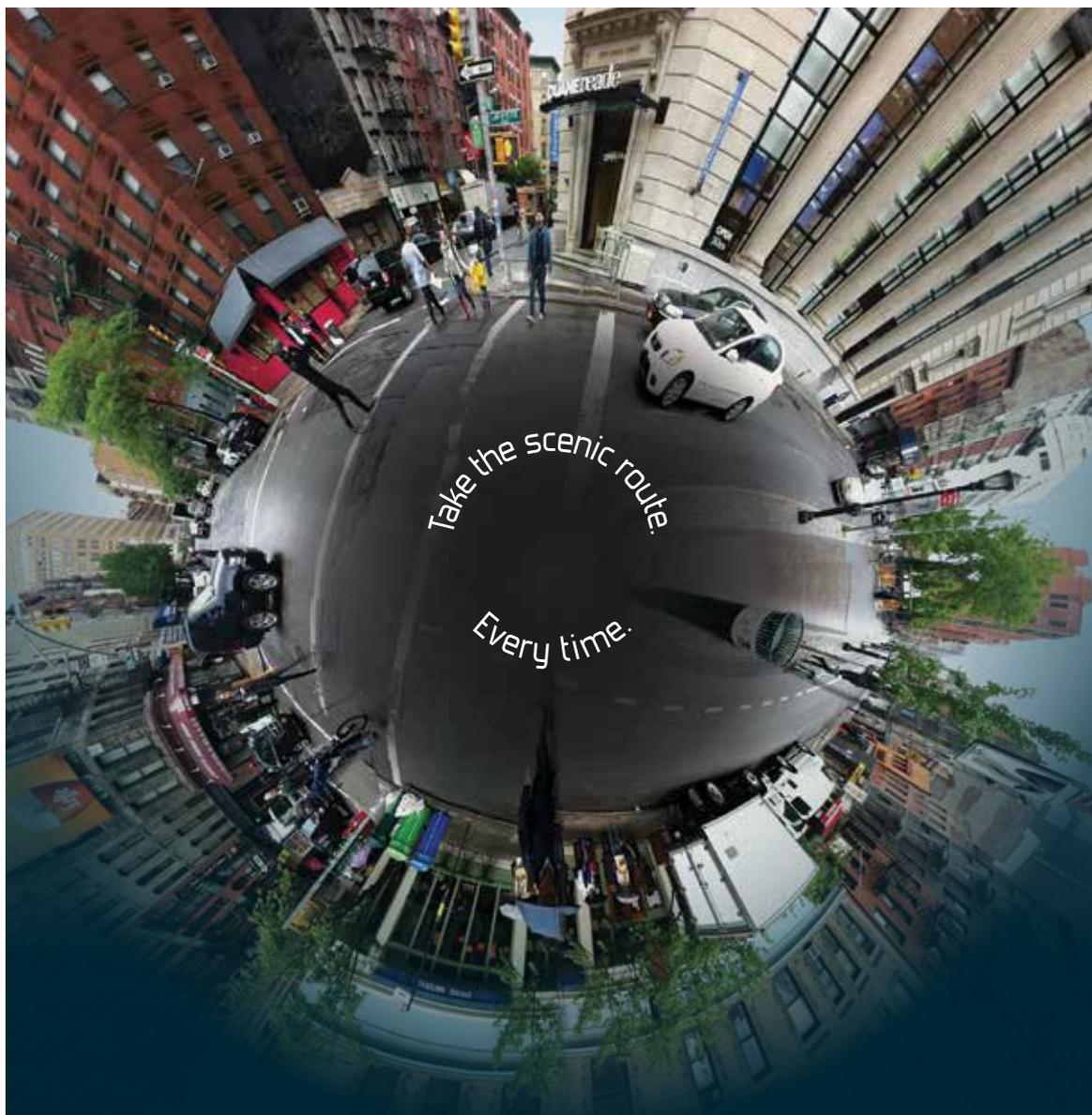
ing program formerly known as Highway Watch, is available at no cost to the industry at <https://www.tsa.gov/for-industry/firstobserver>. On-site, in-person training is available upon request through the website.

TSA is looking for bus industry employees willing to become First Observer Plus authorized trainers and will notify the bus industry of upcoming train-the-trainer opportunities.

Cooper said the Bus Security Action Items is being updated during fiscal 2018.

The agency also is offering free, voluntary TSA Vulnerability Assessments through regional and local security inspectors. Contact [highwaysecurity@tsa.dhs.gov](mailto:highwaysecurity@tsa.dhs.gov) for more information.

TSA also offers a “Motorcoach Counterterrorism Guide” at <http://quickseries.com/products/tsa-motorcoach-counterterrorism-guide>.



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## CDL delays

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

with Americans' demand for goods and services, as well as their personal transportation needs.

While Section 5506 of the FAST Act addresses the skills testing delays issue through annual disclosure of the length of skills test delays, we support H.R.4719 because it requires states to provide testing within seven days.

Currently, states are not held accountable when they fail to provide CDL skills tests to eligible applicants within a reasonable time. Consequently, these states are unnecessarily delaying CDL applicants from testing, securing their CDL, entering the workforce, and moving America's economy forward.

Given the current capacity crunch and projected driver shortage, these delays are unacceptable because individual states are impacting the very people who move interstate commerce. H.R.4719 takes the following steps to ensure efficiency in the CDL skills testing process by:

- **Establishing a standard definition of a skills test delay.** The legislation defines a test delay as the span of time between when a CDL applicant is certified by his/her training provider (successfully completed training) and the date that the CDL exam is scheduled. This allows a fair, accurate, and consistent measurement across all states to determine delay times.

- **Reducing the burden of reporting delays.** This bill requires state motor vehicle databases to keep track of skills test delay times, thereby relieving the burden of motor vehicle employees to track the data manually. As a result, states and the FMCSA will be able to more easily determine the current wait for CDLs by testing location.

- **Increasing reporting requirements to accurately identify problem states.** Under the bill, states will be required to submit quarterly reports on skills test delays. All states will be subject to

the reporting requirement. However, states that do not allow public and private schools, or independent test centers to conduct CDL skills exams will be subject to enforcement action if they fail to limit skills test delays to seven days because it is these states that have been identified as states with the worst delays in the country.

- **Empowering FMCSA to hold states accountable.** States that refuse to reduce their wait times to seven days will have up to 4 percent of their highway funds withheld by the Department of Transportation. In order for this enforcement action to be triggered, a state must have reported delays exceeding seven days at three or more state-run testing locations within two consecutive quarters in a year or three quarters within an 18-month period. States not in compliance will have an additional 270 days to develop an action plan to reduce delays to seven days or less before highway funds are withheld. Withheld funds will be released to the state immediately upon compliance. States have ample time to comply.

H.R.4719 is needed to ensure that states are not unnecessarily delaying applicants from taking their CDL exams. The legislation defers to the state on how best to accomplish this goal and holds them accountable for their failure to ensure reasonable wait times.

Commercial motor vehicle operators are a necessary component of interstate commerce. The trucks hauling the goods and services on which the American people depend, and the buses that safely bring our family and friends to work, school, and home cannot move without qualified drivers with a CDL. This legislation recognizes their importance and seeks greater efficiency. Therefore, we urge you to co-sponsor this legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

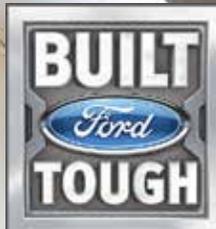
Don Lefevre

President & Chief Executive Officer, Commercial Vehicle Training Association (CVTA)

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# Blake Krapf discusses school bus contracting

By Thomas McMahon  
School Bus Fleet

As CEO of Pennsylvania-based Krapf Group and president of the National School Transportation Association (NSTA), Blake Krapf has a keen perspective on the state of school bus contracting. Here, he shares insights on NSTA initiatives, the widespread driver shortage and the recently passed tax reform bill.

**Question:** What are your key initiatives as president of NSTA?

**Answer:** The NSTA board worked together and approved a very aggressive strategic plan in the spring of 2017. There are a lot of different initiatives within our strategic plan.

However, the piece I would like to focus on is membership. I think it is important to the long-term success of NSTA that we work to grow our membership, retain all of our current members and work to engage all of our members so that we can all benefit and improve our industry through our collective years of experience and knowledge.

**Q:** On the national level, what do you see as the top issues for school bus contractors?

**A:** Unfortunately, I think the biggest issue facing all of us is the same one that has plagued the industry for a number of years now. I think every school bus contractor I have talked to in the last two years

is facing some sort of driver shortage.

There are many reasons why we continue to face this issue, but one of the things we can do as an industry is to work together to raise the image of a school bus driver. Most people don't realize the amount of training, background checks and scrutiny that someone has to go through to become a school bus driver.

School bus drivers do a tremendous job every day under sometimes very difficult circumstances, and as an industry we need to do a better job telling these stories and promoting the excellent job that school bus drivers do on a daily basis.

**Q:** What's your take on how the tax reform bill will impact school bus contractors?

**A:** I am taking a very conservative point of view on the impact of the tax reform bill on school bus contractors. Many of the school bus contractors are small family-owned businesses that are created as pass-through entities. The tax reform bill does not provide significant opportunities for pass-through entities.

The bulk of the legislation provides a significant tax reduction to large corporations with a reduction in the corporate net income



Blake Krapf

rate. The tax reform bill does allow for the immediate expensing of capital assets, which will improve near-term cash flow and defer income taxes.

Hopefully, with the reduction in the corporate income-tax rate, it will generate opportunities to reinvest in the economy.

**Q:** What are the top issues in Pennsylvania right now?

**A:** In addition to the driver shortage, in Pennsylvania we continue to face a potential funding crisis. This past year, our state association (the Pennsylvania School Bus Association) did an excellent job working with our elected officials to maintain the same level of funding for school bus services throughout the commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The original draft of the state budget called for a \$50 million reduction in funding for school bus services. Through the efforts of the members and leadership of PSBA, we were able to restore the funding to the same level as the prior year. Unfortunately, I believe there will continue to be a struggle for funds, as the state is projected to have another difficult budget cycle.

**Q:** What are you most looking forward to in 2018?

**A:** NSTA has the opportunity to work with Congress to help bring regulatory reform to our industry. Congressman Scott Perry, R-Pa., introduced the Buses United for Safety, Regulatory Reform, and En-

hanced Growth for the 21st Century Act (BUSREGS-21 — H.R. 2120).

BUSREGS-21 is a comprehensive bill designed to bring about essential regulatory reform and modernization of regulations that will result in improved safety, expanded investments and job creation for the private school bus industry. This important legislation would:

- Evaluate whether existing regulations applicable to buses are achieving their projected goals

- Modernize and streamline federal motor carrier safety and vehicle safety regulations for the bus industry, including rescission of some unnecessary regulations that do not improve safety

- Provide additional due process protections for bus operators cited for federal violations

- Speed up the approval process for new bus operators desiring to enter the industry

- Ensure that regulations written to apply to both trucks and buses are fully evaluated for their appropriateness to bus operations

- Provide stronger accountability for federally funded public-transit agencies to ensure they are meeting existing requirements to encourage the participation of the private sector

- Create an incentive program for public-transit agencies that partner with the private sector

*Thomas McMahon is executive editor of School Bus Fleet, where this article was first published.*

## Is the new federal ELD mandate overkill?

By Powell Slaughter  
Furniture Today



While I believe reasonable regulations can help protect the water we drink, the air we breathe and the safety of people

at work and on the road, when they're ill-defined or not thought through for potential damaging results, some rules just make life more complicated.

The more I talk to people and read about it, the mandate for electronic logging devices on trucking tractors and buses strikes me as an example of the latter. Before you say I'm against highway safety, bear with me.

With slight fluctuations, fatalities from heavy truck and bus crashes have trended downward. In 2000, there were 776 fatalities

involving such vehicles, according to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. In 2015, they stood at 715.

That doesn't sound like a big drop — and indeed, the statistics make no difference to the families of the deceased — but that's not the whole story.

In 2000, there were 8.7 million large trucks and buses on our roads, and that number stood at 12.1 million in 2015, an increase of 37.9 percent. Looking at fatalities per million vehicle miles traveled — again, all these numbers are from FMCSA — the number fell from 0.205 to 0.14, a decline of 31.7 percent.

For comparison's sake, let's look at fatalities from drunk driving, which also have shown steady, but lesser, declines than those related to heavy truck crashes. In 2015, FMCSA reported 10,265 drunk-driving fatalities, with fatalities per vehicle mile

traveled at 0.33.

Which is the greater threat to safety on our roads and highways? I know my answer.

It's apparent from the limitations on service attributed to strict enforcement of driving hours through ELDs that manual logs have been subject to some "creativity" on drivers' part. One carrier whom I won't name said his drivers called those manual logs "the comic book."

That said, I'll take my chances with a professional driver whose livelihood is largely tied to avoiding crashes and who feels he or she has enough time in the day to safely complete a job even if it means driving an extra hour versus one who's feeling the heat to get somewhere as fast as humanly possible.

Using the mandate's logic for ELDs as it relates to highway safety, I'm wondering why each and every car and truck on the road is not required to have an interlock

device installed in order to prevent intoxicated drivers from starting their vehicles.

I am happy to see that efforts are underway in the trucking sector to amend ELD regulations to accommodate more flexibility in factors such as break times, but I remain of the opinion that the technology is an attempt to fix a problem that wasn't as great as the general public and legislators might have thought.

While that tractor-trailer on the highway might look intimidating, it's the Richard Petty wannabes and the possibly intoxicated folks behind the wheel of a four-wheeler that scare me the most.

I can safely assume most people driving those big rigs have passed a drug test and that they recognize getting into a crash might mean their job, and maybe even their life.

*Powell Slaughter is senior editor at Furniture Today.*

## Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

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# Medical advice for bus regulators: don't be buttheads

By Dave Millhouser



My doctor just retired. In addition to being a great physician, Sidney had the gift of knowing how much doctoring each of his patients

needed.

His bedside manner ranged from "Don't be a butthead, just do it" to doing warm and fuzzy house calls when needed.

He took great pride in keeping his patients out of the hospital, even if it was more work for him.

Not too much, not too little — he doctored each of us just the right amount. We actually enjoyed our visits because his goal was to help us make our individual lives better, not to impose some sort of one-size-fits-all regimen that was "efficient."

Our regulatory system could take a few hints from his practice. Recently a six-bus operator shut down, not because he was forced out, but because he just had enough.

In this case it was the cost and aggravation involved with electronic logging devices. He is not alone, and our industry is shrinking precipitously.

Bureaucrats might well take the position that we are better off without companies that are unable or unwilling to crest the regulatory barriers they put in place. After all, the rules are only there to protect the public.

Really? Is there a larger "weltanschauung?" Chunking in a little German here to improve my gravitas. Look it up; it's a real word.

Is the country better served by shrinking the business? Or are we engaging in a cosmic game of "Not in my backyard?"

Every bus line that closes, or downsizes, reduces the number of seats available in what is arguably the safest (and most economical) form of transportation in the country. That means that either people are traveling less (a bad thing) or are traveling by car (a worse thing).

Regulators with a narrow view are gratified by the fact that, as the fleet shrinks, the number of bus accidents goes down — a real

boon for their statistics. A more common sense worldview recognizes that a substantial portion of the public they serve is being forced to either curtail travel or use riskier forms of transport.

The current regulatory scheme is pushing those irritating accident deaths and injuries into someone else's statistical backyard.

I can only think of three reasons for regulations. First would be to improve safety; second would be to create a level playing field for businesses, so the public benefits; and finally, to make life simpler for regulators. That's probably a reasonable order.

There is a case to be made that a substantial part of the immense number of rules that apply to us do not accomplish those goals in a meaningful fashion and their sheer weight is counterproductive.

What we can strive for is something akin to my doctor's practice — not too much, not too little.

You'll notice we're not hearing of GBBs (Great Big Buslines) bailing out. It's the little folks who quietly give up the ghost.

One reason GBBs hang in is be-

cause they have huge economies of scale in dealing with regulatory requirements like drug testing and technology. Regulatory compliance is a cost of doing business that effectively reduces competition.

Bureaucrats listen to them because it is easier to deal with a few big guys than a lot of little ones. It suits their purpose because the additional regulatory burden appears to reduce casualties.

And gee whiz, who can argue with better safety statistics? Certainly not the folks who die in car accidents, because they've been buried in non-bussy statistical graveyards. Over-regulation doesn't seem to improve overall safety, just bus statistics.

Is the public better served by a shrinking industry? The overburden of regulation is not our only problem, but it certainly drives competent operators out and reduces new entries (with their energy and ideas).

If that's correct, then too many rules certainly don't level the playing field; they tilt it towards the fewer remaining GBBs.

Making things easier for regu-

lators is not a lofty goal. You can make the case that new technology like ELDs will simplify things for operators and law enforcement alike. The fact is that folks who cheated in the old system will find ways to bypass the new ones.

Does that jewel know if you're sleeping (or working another job)?

In addition to reducing travel and putting the public at risk, over-regulation has killed the goose that laid the golden egg. The market for used coaches has shriveled because the small companies who traditionally bought them are disappearing. GBBs and manufacturers take note.

The plea here to regulators is that you learn from my doctor, Sidney, and do just enough to make the patient thrive. Otherwise the surgery will have been successful even when the patient dies.

Too often we've instead gotten the placebo effect, where we spend a lot of energy and money on something that really does nothing.

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

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## GoGround

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

NCAA was represented by Juanita Sheely, director of travel and insurance, and Melissa Piening, associate director for travel business administration.

Representing GoGround were CEO Bill Maulsby and Justin Custardo, operations director.

“The goal of this meeting was to share the exemplary safety record of the industry and show how much has changed since the initial conversations with the NCAA many years ago when they did not feel as confident about the safety record of the industry,” Tetschner said. “We shared facts and figures.”

Wilson said the industry wanted to “update and educate the NCAA on the improvement in safety and training that has occurred in the industry over recent years and highlight how the associations at national and state levels provide valuable and continual training and education to the motorcoach industry. Our message — particularly on improvements in safety, training and the current status of the industry — was well received and provided a more current insight than perhaps they were aware.”

She also stressed that UMA

and ABA represent the voice of the industry on Capitol Hill.

The industry also asked for information about the NCAA’s perceived needs for evaluating charter carrier safety.

“We wanted to know exactly what the NCAA was looking for in their additional requirements for safety standards and certifications so we could compare and see if current statistics met their requirements,” Tetschner said. “They want something more like an FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) oversight for airplane safety and they feel STATS provides that.”

### Operator’s decision

Sheely said NCAA subsidizes an unspecified portion of STATS inspection costs to lower the operators’ expenses. She said the association understands that championship participation requires charter carriers to absorb extra costs but stated, “That is a decision an operator needs to make.”

And that was that.

“This was not a combative meeting,” Tetschner said. “It was clear that this is their decision and they felt they have a process that meets the needs of the transportation they need to coordinate. There is really not another level of discussion. Once we were thanked for

our time, our coalition was not asked for further follow-up or information.”

Nonetheless, Wilson said, the industry offered “to continue to be a resource for the NCAA.”

The panel invited NCAA and GoGround to visit Washington for meetings with industry and FMCSA leaders to discuss other means of ensuring high levels of safety.

Under the NCAA contract extension, GoGround said it would charge operators a flat rate of \$4,500 to maintain inspections of all vehicles based at one location.

GoGround calls STATS Certified “the highest safety protocol in the industry” that “provides collegiate athletics, and all professionals, charged with responsibility for Duty of Care with a standard that remains the highest available.”

GoGround inspections are conducted by Consolidated Safety Services of Fairfax, Va., which formerly conducted inspections for the U.S. Department of Defense bus program. That inspection program was paid for by the federal government and was generally popular with operators, who viewed military certification as a seal of approval and a marketing tool.

When the NCAA contract extension was announced last sum-

mer, Custardo said GoGround’s STATS process was more rigid than the Defense Department’s inspections and would prove that participating carriers practiced a higher duty of care.

“Duty of care” is the legal principle that an individual or organization is obligated to safeguard from harm others who are in their care. This is demonstrated by exercising the watchfulness, caution and prudence that would be used by a reasonable person in similar circumstances. Actions that do not meet this standard could be deemed negligent.

### Fatal crash

NCAA assumed responsibility for championship travel after a motorcoach carrying a college baseball team crashed in Georgia on March 2, 2007. The National Transportation Safety Board reported that 33 members of the Bluffton University baseball team were traveling from Ohio to games in Florida in a coach operated by Executive Coach Travel of Ottawa, Ohio. Seven people were killed.

The National Transportation Safety Board said the accident’s probable cause was the driver’s mistaking an exit ramp for a through-ramp continuing on I-75 due to the Georgia Department of

Transportation’s failure to install adequate signage and pavement markings. Contributing to the severity was the lack of seatbelts on the motorcoach.

Executive Coach had undergone 17 inspections in the previous two years without receiving an out-of-service violation. FMCSA records indicated that its last compliance review had been conducted in 2001.

After GoGround and NCAA announced the continuation of their relationship through the 2021 athletics season, members of the Motorcoach Association of South Carolina voted to opt out of the program and formally oppose the plan.

South Carolina operators expressed concern that third-party inspections could spread through the industry in a July 14 letter to national and state industry associations.

The letter asked, “Where do the inspections, and presumably increased standards, end? Will larger operators insist on larger fees and more burdensome standards to foreclose small fleet operators from competing for this business? Will more of your clients be persuaded to buy into these inspection schemes until you are eventually forced out of business?”

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## Used coaches

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“To help our operators extend their business into new markets, we’ll work with them to find the right vehicle with the right features and options at the right price,” Guralnick said.

For 2017, the major manufacturers reported sales of 2,423 new motorcoaches of 30 feet and longer, up from 2,368 in 2016, according to the American Bus Association Foundation. Those numbers covered vehicles of monocoque, unibody construction as opposed to body-on-frame vehicles.

Sales of used coaches with monocoque chassis fell from 1,169 in 2016 to 1,050 last year, the foundation reported.

Exactly 700 pre-owned coaches were listed for sale during the first week of March on the websites of MCI, Prevost, ABC Companies (Van Hool) and CH Bus Sales (Tems). REV Group, which became the North American distributor of Setra motorcoaches in January, does not list used inventory on its website.

The coach manufacturer and distributor sites tend not to list asking prices, but CH Bus can put you on the road for as little as \$14,900 — the sticker price on a

1998 Prevost H345 with only 922,000 miles on the odometer.

### Finding buyers

“Taking in on trade and disposing of pre-owned equipment is a significant and necessary part of the business as we assist customers in transitioning to new models and new technology,” Scully said. “The ratio of trades versus new coach sales per transaction has remained reasonably consistent for the past few years, which contributes to a healthy industry.”

He said the challenge has always been finding buyers for the used equipment.

“That is no different than it has been historically and no different than in other transportation industries,” Scully said. “Fundamentals are unchanged and negotiating with customers on an accurate value of their equipment always has been and will continue to be a critical item.”

While overall sales of used motorcoaches may have dipped last year while new-coach sales rose, “Our inventory has not increased in lockstep with the market and has been relatively stable since 2013, including even our non-MCI-branded units,” said Brent Maitland, MCI’s vice president of marketing and product

planning.

MCI listed 337 used motorcoaches in inventory, including 224 MCI coaches, 95 Setras, 11 Prevosts, six Van Hools and one Temsa.

Prosperous carriers continue to mix used equipment into their fleets, said the industry finance executive.

“From what I have seen, there is certainly a market for the late-model used vehicles. That may be for people who are debt-averse. If they can get by with a three- or four-year-old coach and generate just as much revenue, why would they buy a new one for much more money?”

“I do a bit of financing of late-model coaches and that market seems to be okay,” he said. “I don’t see a lot of the later-model equipment on the market.”

### Finding balance

Guralnick added, “There was a time when buying a pre-owned coach was the sole province of operators new to the business. No more. The right mix of new and late-model coaches helps an operator financially. It’s about finding the right balance.”

Scully said the value of pre-owned equipment has followed consistent trends and today is no different.

“Desirable, well-maintained models hold value whereas obscure, low-volume, discontinued and poorly-maintained models have their residual values erode more deeply,” he said.

Laffan of ABC said there are plenty of buyers for pre-2007 models, too, because they carry simpler engine emissions technology that is less expensive to maintain.

“The pre-2007 equipment seems to move rapidly when we get it. The five- to six-year-old and newer equipment moves pretty rapidly, too. It is the six- to 10-year-old equipment that gives us the most trouble,” he said.

“When you look at our inventory, those ’07, ’08 and ’09 buses are sitting. We have more of those buses on our lots than any other buses.”

Diminished residual values have shifted many of those used coaches to for-sale-by-owner, Laffan said.

“Trade-in values on those buses are not normally what the customer wants because they may not have been fully depreciated on the customer’s books. It is hard for us to give them the values they want when there is no demand, so we are getting more competition from our customers because they are trying to get more money for their used equipment. It is a quan-

dary that we find ourselves in.”

### New customers

Manufacturers are seeking new consumers for motorcoaches that no longer may be desirable for cross-country travel or luxury charters. Such coaches can be used by churches and for employee shuttles and contract work.

Refurbishment can keep older motorcoaches on the road or restore their resale value.

“New uses for coaches are limited,” Scully said. “However, re-powering, reseating and re-energizing are all ways to increase the marketability of units. These activities are not new — just more enhanced.”

The breath-taking price tags of new motorcoaches and the quirks of residuals on refurbished coaches complicate the market and financing decisions, the finance executive said.

“As these coaches get more expensive, the temptation is to extend the terms that you are going to finance to keep the payments in line,” he said.

As months are added to the loans, however, the monthly payments on a new motorcoach can drop near the range of payments on used equipment. “That is always a bit of a concern I have.”



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# Larry and Lorna Hundt receive Canadian service medal

TORONTO — Larry and Lorna Hundt, founders of motorcoach and tour operator Great Canadian Holidays & Coaches, have received the Meritorious Service Medal, one of the highest levels of distinction an individual can receive in Canada.

Canadian Governor General Julie Payette presented the medal to the Hundts during a ceremony at the Fairmont Royal York in Toronto.

During the ceremony, nearly 60 remarkable Canadians were recognized for their excellence,

courage or exceptional dedication to service with one of the following honors: the Order of Canada, Decorations for Bravery, Meritorious Service Decorations, and the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers.

The Meritorious Service Medal was established by Queen Elizabeth II to recognize the extraordinary people who make Canada proud.

Lorna and Larry Hundt were nominated and selected for the award for their commitment to promoting Canadian unity and pride.

That commitment began on the

night the 1995 Quebec referendum was defeated by a margin of only 1 percent. The referendum asked voters in the French-speaking province to proclaim national sovereignty and make Quebec an independent country.

After the referendum failed, the Hundts decided to do everything they could to remind Canadians of all they have to be proud of and what makes the country great.

They dedicated their motorcoach fleet to Canada, with vibrant exterior graphics including

Great Canadian Women, Our Nation Builders, Great Canadian Moments, Lest We Forget and Canadian Sports Achievements.

"Lorna and I feel incredibly honored to be recognized for the one thing that we both consider to be the most important part of our careers," Larry Hundt said. "Many have thought that our Canadian-themed coaches were the result of a marketing strategy. However, the decision to dedicate our coaches to Canada was an emotional one that was made the night of the

1995 Quebec referendum.

"From that day forward, we branded all our coaches with various Canadian themes to showcase the many things that make our country great and to encourage Canadians to feel pride in their country," said Hundt, who is a member of the United Motorcoach Association board.

"The impact of that decision is impossible to measure, but despite its intangible nature, it quickly became part of our company culture," he said.

## Coach Quarters hits the campaign trail

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Mike Middaugh is a big political supporter. No, he doesn't manage political campaigns or raise large sums for candidates.

But he does keep them moving forward.

Middaugh, president and CEO of Coach Quarters, is helping politicians get to their appointed rounds on the campaign trail in his company's "executive day coaches."

"We have a lot of political candidates who need buses," he said. "The candidate often flies, and we're trying to keep up with where the plane is going to land."

The buses then serve as their local and regional campaign coaches.

Sen. John McCain had three Coach Quarters' executive day coaches at his disposal during his 2008 presidential campaign. He nicknamed each of them the "Straight Talk Express."

"There was one in Arizona, one here in Ohio and one in the Northeast," Middaugh said. "We'd move them around depending on where he was going to land."

The executive day coaches offered by Coach Quarters are 45-foot motorcoaches featuring comfortable seating for 18 to 23 passengers in a combination of individual leather chairs, sofas and dinettes.

There are full-service galleys, designer bathrooms and quality electronics and audio/video equip-

ment that could be found in a high-end home or office. Some have showers, but those coaches are rarely slept on, except possibly by the driver.

Middaugh, who has worked in the motorcoach industry since 1971, said that some coach owners avoid doing business with political candidates because if they lose the election, the operator risks not getting paid. The candidates vanish, as do their bank accounts, offices and phones.

But he said Coach Quarters gets paid in advance and stays ahead a couple of weeks.

"I just sent a contribution to the person that's running the governor's race in Ohio to remind him that he's been on our coaches before," Middaugh said. "The politicians get all these interns running their campaigns, and they don't know where to start when they're told to get a bus.

"Pretty soon, they've gone down some tangent and wind up with a minibus or something, while the candidate has been using our coaches for 10 years. Another thing that can happen is that sometimes these campaign managers want to change routes from minute to minute, and they just don't understand geography."

Middaugh said he once had a campaign manager try to set an itinerary that would require going from Chicago to Dallas overnight.

"They were prepared to hire more drivers, but I had to tell them that wasn't the point, we couldn't go 1,000 miles in one night," he said. "Sometimes on political campaigns, the Secret Service is involved, and they have more common sense about logistics."

Middaugh started Coach Quarters about 10 years ago and has offices in Columbus and Cincinnati.

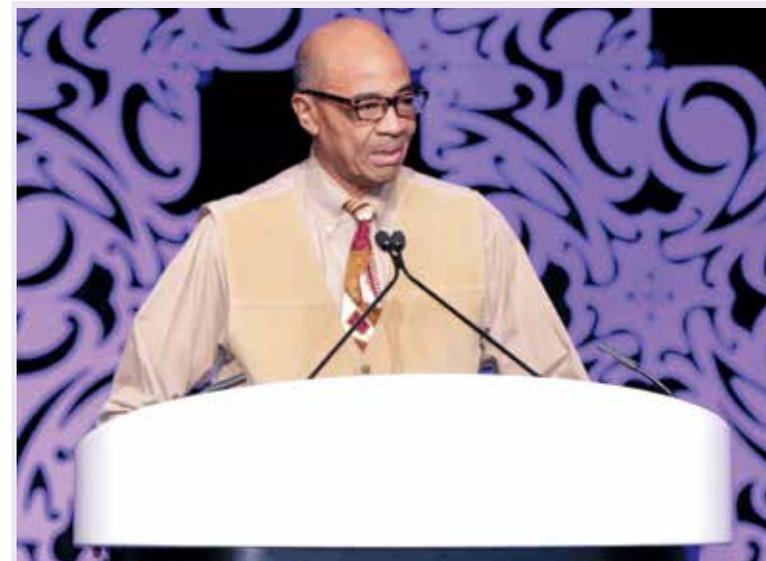
"Ohio is a good, central location. You can get to a lot of places in a legal day's drive," he said.

"Most of our business is corporate. Our customer mix includes large corporations (whose executives) want to visit branch offices and go on sales training or product display tours. We have small businesses such as architectural firms and car dealerships, and we also do family or social groups who go on vacations and travel to weddings, sporting events and concerts."

The company wraps about six coaches a year for political campaigns or product displays and promotions and has had coaches featuring products such as BMW Mini Coopers and Jack Daniels Black Jack Bourbon.

Coach Quarters also sends many buses to sporting events such as the Kentucky Derby.

"Our clients are horse farms," Middaugh said. "We do trips to Churchill Downs from farms in Lexington, Harrodsburg and Versailles. Although the derby is no



**Pastor Charles A. Morgan** of Morgan and Sons Week-End Tours in Greensboro, N.C., died on March 4 at age 78. Morgan, a long-time leader in the motorcoach industry, delivered the blessing before the UMA lunch during Motorcoach Expo 2018 in San Antonio.

doubt one of America's largest social events, our customers are all about business. Once they arrive at Churchill Downs, it's into their suites at the track. If the day's racing went well, it's back on the coach for a celebratory ride back to the farm afterwards."

Coach Quarters also does an annual tour for the Big Ten Conference that visits the pre-season college football training camps of all 14 schools. This is a four-week tour that stretches from the University of Nebraska to Rutgers in New Jersey.

"Sometimes, we use the coaches and no one actually rides in them," Middaugh said. "For example, we'll get down and set up camp at an Ohio

State football game for a corporate tailgate party. The people get to the stadium on their own, but with our coaches, they have the bathroom, air-conditioning and the galley.

"It's so comfortable that many ticket holders stay on the bus and watch the game on television. Since they drove to the stadium, we drive an empty bus back."

Coach Quarters also handles trips for local schools. "We have some girls basketball teams here that are really good, with very active booster clubs. It's not unusual for them to take an executive coach to Florida with 18 girls aboard for \$10,000 a trip," he said.

"I also enjoy working with other UMA members as a farm-out, sub-contractor or on a sales commission basis."

Middaugh worked for the original coach converter, Custom Coach, in Columbus, in 1989.

"Back in the day, entertainers owned their own buses, and coaches were sold to people like Johnny Cash and Dolly Parton. Now, the entertainer, or 'bunk' coach, is more of a leasing operation. I'm probably the only UMA member who doesn't have entertainer coaches."

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Standing behind a pre-owned coach is easy when you've known it since it was new. That's the MCI advantage. Only MCI offers a complete refurbishing of post-2007 J4500 models back to new through its popular **Re-Energized** program that come with a 2 year engine and transmission limited warranty. To simplify shopping, we also categorize coaches in service-ready **Select+** and lowest cost **Deal** classifications. And because it's an MCI, you have the unrivaled support of our entire service network.

Whatever you're looking for in a pre-owned coach, you'll find it at MCI.

**Deal**

**Select+**

**RE Energize**

### Call your MCI pre-owned coach pro today.



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