

# Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

## Joint UMA-ABA 'fly-in' attracts record attendance

WASHINGTON — A record 116 people — including representatives from every state and regional motorcoach association and major national associations — attended this year's Capitol Hill Day "fly-in" to lobby members of Congress about crucial industry issues.

And, for the first time, the United Motorcoach Association and the American Bus Association jointly hosted the annual event.

UMA and ABA traditionally have staged their own fly-in events, but this year they decided to join forces to speak with a unified voice.

"With this being my first legislative fly-in as president and CEO at UMA, along with it being the first joint legislative fly-in for the entire industry, I don't think it could have gone better," said Stacy Tetschner, who took over as the head of UMA last year.

"I am excited about the passion and commitment of the attendees in sharing their insights and personal experiences with their elected representatives," Tetschner said.

"In many cases, I heard elected officials



This year's Capitol Hill Day "fly-in," the first-ever joint United Motorcoach Association-American Bus Association event, attracted a record 116 participants. See more fly-in photos on Pages 12 and 13. Photo by KRR Photography

who were truly interested in better understanding operators' challenges as business people, employers and constituents from the home community that they represent."

Aside from regional and local association attendance, members of the International Motorcoach Group, the National Association of Motorcoach Operators, the

Motorcoach Marketing Council and long-time supporter and sponsor Trailways participated in the fly-in.

In addition, the newly formed Asian American Motorcoach Association held its inaugural meeting the day before the event, and about two dozen representatives from the association joined the effort by meeting with congressional representatives and their staffs.

During the daylong fly-in, participants had meetings scheduled at 152 legislative offices with either members of Congress or their staffs.

"That's 675 individual impressions that will be made on behalf of our industry in one day," Tetschner said.

The main purpose of the fly-in is for operators to meet face-to-face with as many of their congressional representatives as possible to educate them about the bus and motorcoach industry and its concerns and challenges.

Ken Presley, UMA's vice president of legislative and regulatory affairs and industry relations/COO, told fly-in attendees that it is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

## 15-year-old gets a lesson on lobbying representatives

WASHINGTON — Daniel McMichael is taking home more from his trip to Washington, D.C., than a souvenir quill and ink pen set he purchased at the Supreme Court gift shop.

The 15-year-old attended the joint United Motorcoach Association-American Bus Association Capitol Hill Day with his father, Dale McMichael, president of Executive Coach in Lancaster, Pa.

The advanced-placement government student learned what it means to exercise his First Amendment right "to petition the government for a redress of grievances" by attending legislative meetings with Pennsylvania Republican Congressmen Lloyd Smucker, Lou Barletta, Bill Shuster and Scott Perry, and legislative aides for Rep. Pat Toomey, R-Pa.

"It was life changing," Daniel

said. "No matter how long you learn about what goes on in Capitol Hill, you are never truly prepared."

Daniel is writing a paper for his government class about his experience on the Hill, interest group politics and HR 2120 — "Buses United for Safety, Regulatory Reform and Enhanced Growth for the 21st Century" (BUSREGS-21), which was introduced last year by Perry.

The bill targets several regulations proposed or enacted by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Federal Transit Administration.

Industry advocates say HR 2120 is an attempt at comprehensive regulatory reform.

The goal is improving safety

while relaxing unnecessary regulations in a way that will spark investment, growth and expansion in an industry that has contracted in recent years.

Although the bill hasn't gotten a formal hearing in Congress, it still has had a positive impact since it was introduced, and some components of the legislation have made their way into other congressional measures or benefited from executive action.

"Daniel is my retirement plan," his father said, because the teen would like to eventually take over the operations of Executive Coach.

For now, Daniel works at the company cleaning buses, but he hopes to soon start learning about the financial part of the business with an internship in the accounting department.



Fifteen-year-old Daniel McMichael is writing a school paper on a motorcoach bill sponsored by Rep. Scott Perry, R-Pa.

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# OurBus seeking partners to launch intercity routes

NEW YORK CITY — OurBus, a crowd-sourcing tech company, is seeking carriers to partner in launching 74 intercity routes across the United States, said co-founder and CEO Narinder Singh.

“We have short-listed 74 routes where we think the services and partnerships can come into effect,” Singh said. “There are a lot of city pairs that need these kinds of services. There is demand, there are people traveling and there are less options.”

Those routes could keep 220 motorcoaches in daily service, he said.

OurBus was founded in 2016 and has partnered with motorcoach carriers to operate 16 commuter routes and nine intercity routes, mostly serving New York State and New Jersey. It also operates routes to Washington, D.C., and West Chester, Pa.

“Almost every route is served by a different bus company,” Singh said. “We have eight or nine bus companies who are dealing with us on almost an every day or weekly basis. OurBus represents the concept of bus companies using



OurBus, a crowd-sourcing tech company, is seeking carriers to partner in launching 74 intercity routes across the United States.

some of their buses to run under our banner.”

The company offers carriers a recognizable online marketing platform, scheduling, ticket sales and passenger services, he said.

“We have in-house research and analytic teams that have researched intercity travel. We use the data points to make sure which routes should work and even the schedules of those routes,” Singh said.

OurBus has identified potential routes in all parts of the country, he said, and is particularly interested in services based in Florida, Atlan-

ta, Chicago and California.

“We are starting a partnership in Florida, which was considered as a route by another bus company five or six years ago but maybe the market was not set up at that time,” Singh said. “Now we think the time is right.”

In April, OurBus announced extensions of service to Syracuse, N.Y., and Philadelphia on a route that passes through Columbia, Md.

The company is approaching \$6 million in annual revenue, said Singh, who believes revenue could multiply to 15 times that over the

next 18 years.

The OurBus route model is based on a break-even point of 42 seats sold per round-trip run in any combination of riders coming or going, Singh said. “Right now 99 percent of our routes are run on a round-trip basis.”

OurBus provides prospective carriers with projections calling for a route to break even in four months.

“We have some routes that started becoming viable in the second month,” he said. “We started a Pennsylvania-to-New York-to-D.C.

route last weekend. The second bus was sold out. We never thought that would happen in four weeks.”

Ticket prices vary by market, Singh said. “We look at competition — what the train tickets are, what the airline tickets are. If there is a current bus service there, we look at how that is priced. We know the customer is very competitive.”

Prices also vary by time of purchase. “Pricing dynamics kick in after the first band of six tickets,” he said. “On the last two days the pricing dynamics kick in again.”

OurBus tickets may be “priced a little bit more than the traditional bus companies like Megabus and Greyhound, but we are still very competitively priced if somebody wants to book us six or seven days in advance,” Singh said.

“We do not look just at the other bus companies because most of these routes are brand new. We also look at how a city is connected to an airline or a train.”

OurBus prices offered online range from \$8.60 to \$16 for commuter routes and \$17 to \$47.50 for intercity service.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7 ►



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# THE DOCKET

## ELD violations are now part of motorcoach CSA scores

WASHINGTON — Violations of the new federal electronic logging device regulations are becoming part of carrier Compliance, Safety, Accountability scores posted on the national Safety Measurement System website.

ELD regulations became effective on December 18, but the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration delayed enforcement until April 1 to allow carriers more time to resolve widespread problems with installation and activation of the devices and software.

Logging and ELD transgressions accounted for the four leading categories of violations detected by commercial vehicle inspectors of motorcoach drivers across the country during the first quarter of the year.

While ELD violations were not enforced during the first quarter, violation statistics were reported to FMCSA.

FMCSA announced last month that new ELD violations would be added to the hours-of-service category, one of seven parts of the Behavior Analysis and Safety Improvement Categories (BASICS) used to identify carriers that pose the greatest risks to safety.

### 12.9% of truckers not ELD compliant

WASHINGTON — Data compiled by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration indicates that nearly 13 percent of the commercial trucks operating during the first three months of the year did not have proper electronic logging devices.

Statistics weren't available for motorcoaches.

"The 32,621 violations for violation code 395.22A, divided by 252,877, which is the total number of violations, equals 12.9 percent," FMCSA said. "That is the percent-

"As of April 1, 2018, violations related to Electronic Logging Device (ELD) regulations found during roadside inspections are being used in the SMS," FMCSA announced. "These violations are not being applied retroactively; violations recorded prior to April 1,

age of violations that were 'no ELD' violations.

"The metric FMCSA uses to measure compliance rates is the number of driver inspections with no ELD violations — in this case, there were 32,819 driver inspections with at least one 395.22A violation, divided by the total number of driver inspections, 796,827, through March 20, which produces 4.1 percent of the driver inspections recording a violation of 395.22A.

"In other words, 95.9 percent

2018, will not be counted in SMS.

"Motor carriers that have received ELD-related violations will start to see them reflected in their HOS Compliance BASIC in early May 2018 when the next monthly SMS results are released."

The electronic devices automat-

ically record vehicle operations to track records of duty status (RODS) to improve compliance with hours-of-service (HOS) regulations.

With ELD regulations in full effect, FMCSA has published new related violations:

- Having no logbook when an ELD is required
- Having no logbook when an ELD is not required, such as for an ELD-exempt truck
- Not using the appropriate method to record hours of service.

These violations carry a severity rating of 5 on a scale of 1 to 10.

HOS violations with severity ratings of 10 include operating a commercial motor vehicle while ill, fatigued or impaired by any other cause, as well as driving after being declared out of service. Other violations rated at 5 are related to maintenance of RODS.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

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# Operation Safe Driver Week scheduled for July 15-21

GREENBELT, Md. — The Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance's 2018 Operation Safe Driver Week will take place July 15 to 21.

Traffic safety personnel will be on the lookout for unsafe driving behaviors by commercial motor vehicle drivers and passenger vehicle drivers as they work toward zero deaths on roadways.

Unsafe driver behaviors by CMV drivers and passenger vehicle drivers continue to be the leading cause of crashes. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's "Large Truck Crash Causation Study" cites driver behavior as the critical reason for more than 88 percent of large truck crashes and 93 percent of passenger vehicle crashes.

Examples of dangerous driver behaviors that enforcement personnel will be tracking throughout Operation Safe Driver Week are speeding, distracted driving, texting, failure to use a seatbelt while operating a CMV or in a passenger vehicle, following too closely, improper lane change, and failure to obey traffic control devices.

CVSA's Operation Safe Driver Program was created to help to reduce the number of crashes, deaths and injuries involving large trucks, buses and passenger vehicles due

to unsafe driving behaviors. During Operation Safe Driver Week, there will be increased CMV and passenger vehicle traffic enforcement.

Operation Safe Driver Week is sponsored by CVSA, in partner-

ship with FMCSA and with support from industry and transportation safety organizations.

It aims to help improve the behavior of all drivers operating in an unsafe manner — either in or around CMVs — through educa-

tional and traffic enforcement strategies to address individuals exhibiting high-risk driving behaviors.

To find out about Operation Safe Driver Week enforcement events going on in your area, con-

tact the agency/department responsible for overseeing CMV safety within your jurisdiction. A list of agencies can be found at <https://cvsa.org/contactpage/contacts/law-enforcement-lead-agency-contacts>.

## Roadcheck to focus on HOS

GREENBELT, Md. — The Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance has scheduled its 2018 International Roadcheck for June 5 to 7.

Over the 72-hour period, inspectors in jurisdictions throughout North America will conduct inspections of commercial motor vehicles and drivers, with a focus on hours-of-service compliance.

"The top reason drivers were placed out of service during 2017 International Roadcheck was for hours-of-service violations," said CVSA President Capt. Christopher Turner of the Kansas Highway Patrol.

Turner said 32 percent of drivers who were placed out of service during last year's Roadcheck were cited for violations related to hours-of-service regulations.

"It's definitely an area we need to call attention to this year," he said.

"Although the electronic logging device rule that went into effect on Dec. 18, 2017, does not change any of the underlying hours-of-service rules or exceptions, the ELD mandate placed a spotlight on hours-of-service compliance.

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# Road to Zero Coalition seeks to end highway deaths

TASCA, Ill. — The Road to Zero Coalition, managed by the National Safety Council, released a comprehensive report laying out strategies for ending roadway deaths in the United States by

2050.

It is the first time in the nation's history that so many organizations have collaborated to put forth a comprehensive plan to address motor vehicle fatalities,

which have recently increased after years of decline.

The coalition report identified three main initiatives to reduce roadway fatalities:

- Double down on what works

through proven, evidence-based strategies

- Advance life-saving technology in vehicles and infrastructure
- Prioritize safety by adopting a safe systems approach and creating a positive safety culture

"We demand 100 percent safe operations in aviation, marine, pipeline, rail and transit, we should cultivate a corresponding societal

demand for safe roads," said Deborah A.P. Hersman, president and CEO of the National Safety Council.

"With these three guidelines, everyone can do something to reduce fatalities on the roadway. Getting to zero fatalities is not impossible — it just hasn't been done yet."

The report can be found at <https://www.nsc.org>.

## FMCSA lists ELD-related violations

The following is FMCSA's list of ELD-related violations and their corresponding severity weights.

Each BASIC violation is assigned a severity weight that reflects its relevance to crash risk. Crash risk is defined as the risk of crashes occurring and the consequences of the crash after it occurs.

The violation severity weights have been converted into a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represents the lowest crash risk and 10 represents the highest crash risk relative to the other violations in the BASIC.

- ELD — No record of duty status (ELD Required) — 5
- No record of duty status when one is required (ELD Not Required) — 5
- Not using the appropriate method to record hours of service — 5

- Failing to provide supporting documents in the driver's possession upon request — 7

- The ELD's display screen cannot be viewed outside of the commercial motor vehicle — 5

- Operating with a device that is not registered with FMCSA — 5

- Portable ELD not mounted in a fixed position and visible to driver — 1

- Driver failing to maintain ELD user's manual — 1

- Driver failing to maintain ELD instruction sheet — 1

- Driver failed to maintain instruction sheet for ELD malfunction reporting requirements — 1

- Driver failed to maintain supply of blank driver's records of duty status graph-grids — 1

- Driver failed to make annotations when applicable — 1

- Driver failed to manually

add location description — 1

- Driver failed to add file comment per safety officer's request — 1

- Driver failed to manually add CMV power unit number — 1

- Driver failed to manually add the trailer number — 1

- Driver failed to manually add shipping document number — 1

- Driver failed to select/deselect or annotate a special driving category or exempt status — 1

- Driver failed to certify the accuracy of the information gathered by the ELD — 1

- Failing to follow the prompts from the ELD when editing/adding missing information — 1

- Driver failed to assume or decline unassigned driving time — 5

- Failing to note malfunction that requires use of paper log — 5

## ELD violations

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Log-related problems accounted for 60.2 percent of all motorcoach driver violations detected by commercial vehicle inspectors from January through March, according to data posted by FMCSA.

The agency listed 3,476 motorcoach driver inspections and 778 violations in the first quarter. None of the drivers were placed out of service.

The violations included:

- Operating with a device that is not registered with FMCSA
- ELD cannot transfer ELD records electronically
- Log violation (general/form and manner)

- Driver failing to maintain ELD user's manual

- Failure to maintain instructions for automatic onboard recording device

- Driver RODS not current

- Failure to maintain instruction sheet for reporting ELD malfunctions

Logging violations accounted for the top two categories of driver violations reported for all commercial motor vehicle driver categories. "Operating with a device that is not registered with FMCSA" was reported in 33,100 violations and resulted in 20 driver out-of-service orders, and "log violation (general/form and manner)" was cited 26,440 times and led to 74 out-of-service orders.

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# Van Hool officially announces new Tennessee bus plant

MORRISTOWN, Tenn. — Belgian motorcoach maker Van Hool officially announced its plans to build its first American bus manufacturing plant in Tennessee, employing at least 600 workers to start and possibly as many as 1,200 within five years.

Once the facility is operational in the first quarter of 2020, Van Hool will manufacture around 400 buses and commuter coaches annually for the North American public transit market.

The \$47 million plant will be similar to the 450,000-square-foot Van Hool manufacturing facility in Macedonia.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the new site will take place at the end of this summer.

“We have over 30 years of experience in the North American market, where we have been successful with buses and coaches for

private companies,” said Van Hool CEO Filip Van Hool.

“We’ve delivered over 11,000 vehicles in North America since 1987. Based on this experience and through market research, we have learned that the public transportation market, with a total annual potential of 6,000 to 8,000 vehicles, offers opportunities for Van Hool,” he said.

“Because of the ‘Buy America Act,’ our family business decided to explore a new manufacturing facility in the U.S.”

Under the 1982 Buy America Act, vehicles supplied to public authorities must be assembled in the U.S., contain 70 percent of their parts from American suppliers and use 100 percent American steel.

ABC Companies is the North American distributor of Van Hool motorcoaches.

Filip Van Hool said the pres-

ence of highly-respected technical schools and well-trained employees, together with the support and cooperation of all the local stakeholders in Morristown, Hamblen County and Tennessee, convinced

the company’s executive board “to make the largest investment outside of Belgium in Van Hool’s 71-year history.”

“We really want to offer a particularly competitive product on the

public bus transportation market in America. This new type of bus will be fully designed and developed by the engineers at the design office in Koningshooikt,” Belgium, Van Hool’s headquarters.

## OurBus

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Riders accustomed to transit bus service appreciate the motorcoach experience, Singh said.

“That is our whole concept. We are trying to use the big charters that have never done line runs. They have beautiful buses that they do not use every day of the year,” he said. “They can have a driver who works five days a week and has a good, steady income rather than waiting for a call to ring about a charter.”

OurBus requires that its carriers maintain service at motorcoach levels, he said.

“We tell them the buses have to be not more than two or three years old. They have to have all the amenities such as an onboard restroom and charging stations. We try to control the Wi-Fi — most bus companies do not understand how important Wi-Fi is on a three- to four-hour journey.”

OurBus shares ticket revenues with its partners, Singh said.

“They keep 80 percent of the revenue and we keep 20 percent of the revenue. They give us a bus and a driver and we plan the schedule, market the business for them and grow the business for them.”

Ticket revenue, all paid online, is booked on a Monday-Sunday weekly basis, he said. “We close by Tuesday night and start sending payments on Wednesdays and Thursdays.”

Several buses may be required to service a route’s frequency schedule. For example, he said, “When we are starting New York

to Syracuse, it may take three to four buses to run this route with the schedule we want. A run from New York City to D.C., which also would connect to a couple of points in Maryland and a couple in New Jersey, might need six or seven buses. It depends on what the bus company is interested in doing.”

Multiple carriers may service some routes, he said. “Our agreements tell the bus companies they have the first right if we want to increase a route. If we need four buses and they have only three, we have a right to get a second bus company to come in.”

OurBus staffs an in-house compliance team and counsel to examine carriers that are interested in partnering, Singh said. “We look into their records — all those things that are in the public domain.”

Carriers partnering with OurBus are identified along with their routes on the ticket sales website. Current partners include Frank Martz Coach Company, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.; EmpireCLS, Secaucus, N.J.; Martz Gold Line, Tuxedo, Md.; Liberty Coach, Mount Pocono, Pa.; Stout’s Transportation, Trenton, N.J.; Panorama Tours, Clifton, N.J.; and MJM Travel Group, Yonkers, N.Y.

OurBus is planning to launch routes connecting five or six Florida cities with two carriers in May, Singh said. “We are looking at Chicago in a very big way. We have three to four partners that are thinking about getting on board with us.”

Service connecting a “major city pair” in California could be introduced in June, he said.



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# Time can be the ultimate killer of marketing

By Christian Riddell  
Motorcoach Marketing Council



For those of you who may not know, we recently wrapped up the first-ever motorcoach marketing industry survey.

The survey accounted for nearly 3,500 pieces of equipment and shined a light on a number of the hurdles our industry faces when it comes to marketing.

While the vast majority of respondents indicated that they would like to be doing more marketing, the survey also revealed several issues that keep them from doing everything they'd like to do.

The top three answers? Time, budget and staff availability.

**SHOCKING!** Well, probably not if you have been in this industry long enough to run your first charter. Nevertheless, this information is important and helpful.

As a council, we have long believed that these are the central issues that plague this industry, and we continue to try to provide the tools, training and resources to address them. But we're not kidding ourselves; we know there's not a magic bullet that can manufacture more time, money or employees.

That being said, there are ways to lessen the impact of these limitations on your ability to more consistently move your marketing objectives forward.

More than 55 percent of those who completed the survey said time was one of their biggest obstacles when it came to marketing. Simply put, it's hard to find time to think about, plan, build and implement marketing strategies.

As the director of sales for a motorcoach operation, this reality was emblazoned on my mind forever. I distinctly remember the haunting feeling of the never-ending list in my mind of stuff to do: marketing, sales calls, customer visits and meetings to attend.

That list notwithstanding, this was the actual reality: buses breaking down, drivers getting sick, weather, customer complaints and all the other operational realities that come with this business.

So, what happened to me was what I know happens to many of you on a daily basis. The sales, marketing and growth objectives simply got pushed to the back of the pile. They became overwhelming as the weeks and months stacked up, and I actually began to

believe those objectives didn't really need to come to fruition. ("It's working now and I'm not doing it, so it can't be that important.")

You and I both know this simply isn't the case. Marketing is about growing demand for your product. More demand means more opportunity to raise prices, and that's something I know we all need to do.

As a council, we've designed all of our tools with your time in mind. While many of the tools address budget and staff concerns as well, their primary focus has always been to help you plan, create and implement marketing without having to spend as much time doing it.

I want to highlight the tools we offer and briefly discuss the ways each one can be a timesaver for your business.

**Social Library:** For those of you who may not know, the social media library we've created is free to use (no account required) and it's available on our website.

Social media is a powerful marketing tool, but the creation of content can sometimes be a daunting task. (It's a Wednesday in May, and you just moved a group of weary business travelers from the airport to the hotel. Let's face it, there's not much news in that story.)

Often the business of motorcoach travel, whether line run or charter, can be less than exciting from a content-development standpoint. This, then, is the quandary of our industry: do we post nothing, post more pictures of empty buses or come up with (and implement) a great strategy for developing a content engine that involves the drivers, staff and customers?

We all want to choose option C, but we usually find ourselves somewhere between A and B. The library was designed to augment your existing content when you don't have the time or material to do something on your own.

Our social media library is available 24/7, and all you have to do is copy, paste and post. Because trying to post five to seven times a week can be daunting, many companies use it to fill in the gaps. Other companies generate their own material by putting a spin on ideas they get from viewing the library.

However you decide to use it, this is a tool that everyone can take advantage of.

**Training Videos and Motorcoach Marketing Magazine:** What if I told you about a free video that would give your new sales or marketing person every-

## Marketing Minute GoMotorcoach It's the Smart Move

thing he or she needs to know to effectively market and sell to any one of 25 vertical charter markets? (I can even sweeten the deal by saying that it takes less than 30 minutes to watch.)

Additionally, what if I told you there was a publication that takes all the marketing information out there and condenses it to give you the stuff you really need to know?

We know that training is a major hurdle in this industry and it is often the responsibility of the owners and managers to pull it off. They're typically so busy with the day-to-day operational concerns, however, that training doesn't happen (or people don't even get hired in the first place).

If there is one tool in our toolbox that is underutilized, it's our library of training videos. These campaign-specific videos were created for this industry. (They're not motivational content built for the trucking industry that we've recycled for the crumbs.)

Each one gives you, in a matter of minutes, the information we've learned from looking at charter operations that are successfully selling work into these markets. Companies are using these videos to train new staff by holding "lunch and learns" for their entire sales departments or by assigning them to sales staff and holding them accountable for implementation over the coming months.

Motorcoach Marketing is our free quarterly digital magazine that's all about effectively marketing your business. Because the ecosystem of marketing is huge and often overwhelming, the mission of this magazine is to put the essential stuff you need to know in one place. Our goal is to make it easier than ever to keep your finger on the pulse of what is now and what is to come.

We've noticed that companies that use these tools have a level of focus on marketing and sales that isn't replicated by companies that aren't using them. They provide, even to seasoned veterans in this industry, a pile of ideas and strategies that effectively help motorcoach operators market their businesses.

**The Design Center:** One of the foundations of the GoMotorcoach tool library is an online design cen-

ter that allows you to customize thousands of pieces of marketing with your company logo, contact information and photos.

These motorcoach-specific tools were created to support companies in rolling out powerful campaigns with just a few minutes invested in actually creating the art. Gone are the days of trying to figure out how to use a design program, finding clip art or trying to convey your vision to someone who simply doesn't understand our industry or your objectives.

This powerhouse of materials includes both digital and printed tools. While there is a small cost (\$199) to access the library, it gives users the ability to make anything from bus wrap elements to postcards, brochures and stickers.

While some companies use these design tools to develop all of their marketing materials, many more use it to augment the things they already do. For example, many customers utilize it to inexpensively and quickly create things such as tablecloths and pop-up banners when they are attending trade shows.

Others with a strong brand and employees that design their marketing content use these tools to test the waters in markets they haven't focused on in the past. (This helps them determine if they want to invest in making their own materials in the future.)

Still others simply take the verbiage, ideas and images and build a campaign unique to them.

**Do It For You:** This is the ultimate timesaver. Rolled out in 2017, this program was specifically designed to address the time concerns we see in the industry. This is how it works: select what you need and allow us to custom build materials just for you.

You can even have them implemented on your behalf on a limited scale. If it sounds easy, that's because it is!

For example, let's say that you want digital flyers for each campaign that can be attached to quotes or sent with your monthly emails. Now, with one click of a button, a couple photos of your coaches and a logo, our team will create them for you.

If you wake up tomorrow and say, "We need more wedding business," you can order a program designed to put that in motion with the same click of a button. This program allows us to build materials, help buy the list of players you

## Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 10 ►

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# Never allow a loose nut behind the wheel of a coach

By Dave Millhouser



If there was a competition for “bus slalom,” my buddy’s weary old 4106 could have contended for the gold.

He’d checked everything: tie rods, bearings, tires — even the steering box — to no avail. That jewel cruised Interstate 95 zigzagging like a WWII convoy avoiding U-boats.

Since recent columns taking on left- and right-hand turns didn’t result in any nasty repercussions, it seems safe to take a shot at “driving straight.” It shouldn’t take a ton of skill to navigate a highway, but there are factors that can make it challenging.

In the case of the meandering GM, after going through everything connecting the steering wheel to the tires multiple times, my pal found a sneaky little gear hiding in a bulkhead that was worn. Any time your bus seems to have a mind of its own you’ll want to check all the mechanical stuff

and tires for wear.

When it comes to front tires, you should not play favorites. They should each get the same amount of love (and air).

There are other technical factors that can cause wandering and excessive tire wear. Improperly adjusted toe-in, caster and camber can all make a difference in how willingly a coach goes where you point it.

In ye olden days toe-in was the one you could adjust (you wanted your bus to be slightly pigeon-toed). Some modern buses with independent suspensions allow you to set caster, which is an angle on the steer axle that makes your tires want to come back to center.

If any of these are out of “spec” you’ll get poor tire wear at a minimum and squirrely handling at worst. Unlike me, a smart person can often look at tire wear patterns and know what’s not right.

Assuming all your mechanicals are up to snuff, there are a variety of other factors you can use as an excuse for weaving. Crosswinds can create problems. It’s fairly obvious that they push on the side of your coach, but how hard they shove var-

‘You can be passing a truck and when you ease out of its shelter, be blown sideways.’

ies with the bus.

The length of the coach, as well as its height, determine how much “sail area” you have to contend with, but other factors like wheelbase and number of axles are considerations.

Wind can be cunning, too.

We once had a Scenicruiser blown off the road by a gust that sneaked in between two hills. That jewel lay on its side like a giant French fry. When we got a closer look, it had been transformed into a crinkle cut — totaled.

Coming out of a tunnel can be exciting because wind conditions at the exit are often different than the entrance, perhaps because there is usually a mountain between them.

Lest you think you’re safe in an urban environment, under some conditions tall buildings create

their own microclimate. Driving atop a raised highway gives crosswinds an extra shot at you.

You can be passing a truck (or, heaven forbid, vice versa) and when you ease out of its shelter, be blown sideways. In addition, large vehicles all trail at least some turbulence that can misdirect you.

The recent revival of shorter coaches makes things even more interesting. Many are the same height as their 45-foot siblings, but have a shorter wheelbase and no tag axle acting like a rudder. I’m not smart enough to know how much, but they certainly behave differently in a gale.

Roads are crowned to encourage rainwater to head towards the shoulders. Your bus will often follow that same sideways path unless you give it direction. This is one reason why so many nighttime accidents involve vehicles straying off the highway at a shallow angle, while the driver snoozes.

The good news is that there are a couple of things you can do that will keep you on the “straight and narrow.”

First, slowing down negates virtually all these spoilers. Cross-

winds don’t move you as far, and turbulence is lessened when you’re driving slower.

Second, paying attention gives you a chance to anticipate a truck’s wake, or a wind-gust sneaking between buildings or hills. Staying wide-awake prevents the road’s crown from taking you down.

And third, have a feel for the coach you’re driving. How does it react to road conditions? Is it different than other buses you’ve driven?

My pal Oakie used to check alignment by driving a 4104 slowly down a straight stretch of road. He would leap out of the drivers seat, run to the back of the bus and touch the lavatory door, and scurry back behind the wheel. If the coach hadn’t left the road, alignment was adequate.

It wasn’t QUITE as scary as it sounds, since a 4104 was only 35 feet long.

Which brings us to the most significant factor in safe bus navigation. Never allow a loose nut behind the wheel.

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





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# Motorcoach Marketing Council seeking industry partner

The Motorcoach Marketing Council has issued a request for proposal (RFP) to associations and vendors around the industry seeking a partner for the 10-year-old organization.

“Our objective going forward is to partner with an entity who shares our passion and wants to work with us to achieve our goals,” the council’s RFP states.

Jeff Rogers of First Class Tours in Houston, the council’s board president for the past three years,

said the organization has produced many tools and received a lot of support from the industry.

“The last few years have been exciting for the council, and we’ve reached more operators than ever before,” Rogers said.

“With one part-time executive director, a limited budget and a board of volunteers, we’ve been able to accomplish a lot and we are very proud of that,” he said.

“But we want to do more.”

In the future, the council hopes

to expand current efforts in order to help motorcoach operators sell more charters, to more people, for more money, said Christian Riddell, the council’s executive director.

“This is the start of a new chapter in the council’s history, one that I am very excited to be a part of,” Riddell said. “We need to find an organization that is as passionate about this work as we are, an entity we can leverage to help us take what we already do and make it even better.

“This is important work; we are talking about the very fundamentals of business in all that we do.

“If we are able to better leverage marketing in our industry, we can increase demand. An increase in demand makes it possible to increase prices.

“We can solve any number of issues in our industry when we do that, including the driver shortage we are all dealing with,” he said.

While council members are the

first to admit there’s a lot of work ahead, they are optimistic about the future.

“We have seen more and more companies want to engage in marketing,” Riddell said.

“Though that may not sound like much, desire is the precursor to action.”

Companies or organizations interested in learning more about the council’s RFP can send an email to Riddell at [chris@go-motorcoach.org](mailto:chris@go-motorcoach.org).

## Checks will be reissued to Caterpillar engine owners

Checks sent to Caterpillar ACERT engine owners who were part of a \$60 million class-action settlement are being reissued.

According to the website established for members of the class, which includes anyone who owned or leased a vehicle with a Caterpillar ACERT engine manufactured between 2006 and 2010, a calculation error resulted in checks issued for the wrong amount.

A stop payment has been is-

sued for the checks and the settlement administrator is working to resolve this matter and promptly reissue settlement checks.

The \$60 million settlement was reached in June 2016 after a several class-action lawsuits were filed against Caterpillar claiming its ACERT C13 and C15 engines were defective and that the company knew about it. The issues stemmed from Caterpillar’s exhaust gas recirculation system.

## Marketing Minute

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

need to know in your market or make and mail the first postcard to that market.

Whether you want a single marketing item or a constant flow of new materials, this program was designed to take time out of the equation.

We have seen companies use this as a tool to keep marketing moving during busy seasons. Others choose to use this instead of pulling staff off of their existing duties in order to make sure their mar-

keting objectives are accomplished.

Still others are tired of talking about getting to marketing “some-day,” and they use this program to finally get the ball rolling. However you decide to use it, we know it will help you move forward as never before.

Time is a major hurdle when it comes to marketing in this industry.

Though we know marketing is important, it tends to be pushed aside due to operational constraints. Because our council was built by the industry and for the industry, we know (all too well) that

good intentions, by themselves, don’t deliver results.

We strive to provide solutions and give you the tools you need to help you sell more charters, to more people, for more money.

If you want to learn more about our services, visit our website and sign up for a live (or watch a pre-recorded) JumpStart Webinar. In 45 minutes, we’ll introduce you to everything we offer and help you get started.

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

# Operators Count on UMA



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UNITED MOTORCOACH ASSOCIATION

## Fly-in

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

more important than ever for the industry to push for less federal regulation because of industry contraction.

Presley said this is the “first time we have dropped below 3,000 carriers in the more than 30 years I have been in the industry.”

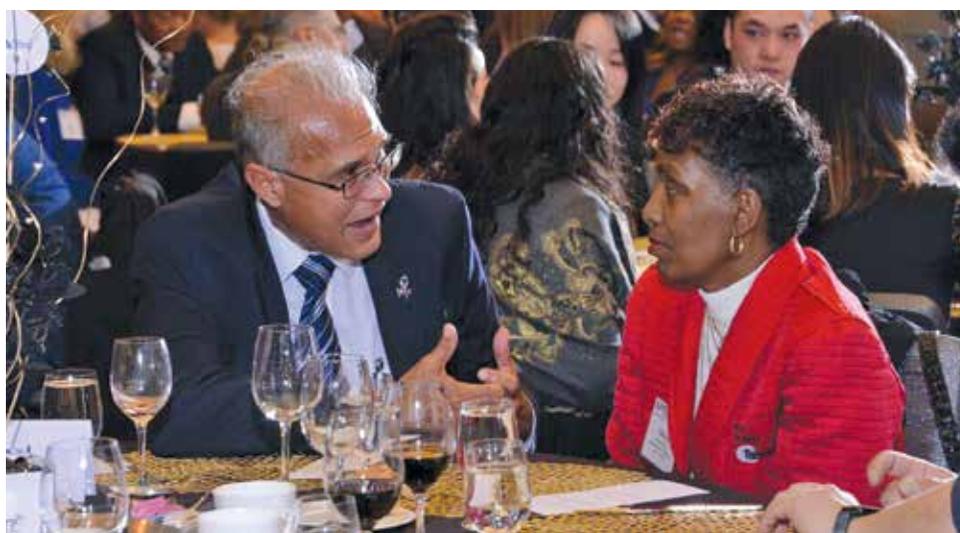
“The regulatory environment was discouraging for small fleet operators to stay in business,” he said. “And, the new entrant screening at FMCSA was taking six to 10 months or longer. This did have a significant impact on the industry from 2008-2017.

“In the recent past, the regulatory and enforcement environment has been best described as oppressive. The industry stopped growing by fleet and number of companies while the number of passengers served, primarily in charters and tours, has been severely contracting. It was about time the industry told Congress its story.”

As Congress considers legislation that would potentially affect the bus and motorcoach industry, fly-in participants asked their legislators to require separate and distinct impact analyses for rulemakings that affect both trucks and buses to take into account the differences between the two industries.

The motorcoach industry also is pushing for changes in Federal Transit Administration regulations so private-sector companies can participate more in the transit arena.

ABA President and CEO Peter Pantuso said lawmakers take notice when their local constituents take the time to meet them in



Godfrey LeBron, chief administrative officer of the Asian American Motorcoach Association, chats with UMA board member Marcia Milton of First Priority Trailways.

person.

“There is nothing more powerful than having someone local make a visit to the Hill,” Pantuso said.

Becky Weber, managing director of Prime Policy Group, a lobbying firm that works with UMA, briefed attendees before their meetings with representatives, outlining important issues and giving advice on how to stress the importance of the industry.

Weber told attendees to emphasize to legislators how many people they employ, how many customers their businesses serve and the role their companies play in their community. The industry includes 35,000 motorcoaches, 600 million passenger trips and 69 billion passenger miles annually.

“These are the best meetings because you can develop a relationship with members and their staff,” she said.

Weber also reminded attendees that “you have safe drivers and you operate safe companies. On average there are 20 occupant motorcoach fatalities and five occupant school bus fatalities annually, while operating in a highway environment that results in nearly 40,000 fatalities.”

Fly-in participants were also urged to remind legislators that motorcoach travel is green.

“According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, motorcoach travel is a ‘low-carbon travel champ,’ emits less than one-sixth the carbon pollution of a typical car with one

passenger, and choosing motorcoach travel over driving alone reduces CO2 emissions by an average of 85 percent,” Weber said.

Scott Riccio, president, owner and founder of Northeast Charter & Tour Co., has attended the fly-in for the past 10 years, and he said this was the best one.

“We got a very positive reaction when we told staffers that we had 116 people representing our industry. It made an impact,” Riccio said.

UMA board member Bob Greene, sales representative at Amaya-Astron Seating, has attended the fly-in for the past five years. “Consistency with the staff builds familiarity and builds comfort there,” he said.

Presley echoed that sentiment, saying the “best thing to come out of the fly-in is our industry is more connected with legislators, and legislators learn more about the operators.”

“Everybody getting better connected and opening communication channels helps our industry. The legislators many times end up calling the operators for advice, asking ‘how does this affect you?’”

UMA continued its tradition of holding two campaign fundraisers during the fly-in. This year’s candidates were Rep. Scott Perry, R-Pa., and Rep. Sam Graves, R-Mo., both members of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee.

“Participation in both fundraisers was outstanding,” Presley said. “As always, our go-to veterans were there for us and we were joined by many first-timers. Many thanks to everyone who came out for the campaign events.”

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Left to right, ABA President and CEO Peter Pantuso, UMA Board Chair Gladys Gillis and UMA President and CEO Stacy Tetschner on the Capitol steps.



Becky Weber, managing director of Prime Policy Group, a lobbying firm that works with UMA, briefs attendees before their meetings with representatives.



UMA Board Chair Gladys Gillis (left) of Starline Luxury Coaches, Tom Casazza of Starline, Rep. Dave Reichert, R-Wash., Michael Gibson of TDM Holdings, Machree Gibson of the Graydon Group, and UMA President and CEO Stacy Tetschner in Reichert's office.



UMA Board Vice-Chair Jeff Polzien, left, and Ken Presley, UMA's vice president of legislative and regulatory affairs and industry relations/COO, prepare for a meeting with Sen. James Lankford, R-Okla.



Brent Maitland of MCI (left), William Winkler of Peoria Charter Coach Co., Tingting Guo of the Asian American Motorcoach Association and John Miller of Miller Transportation.



Sylvia Jackson of AMBEST Inc. and Daryl Johnson of J&J Charters pose during dinner the night before Capitol Hill Day.



Motorcoach technology company UBT hosted a dinner at the W Hotel in Washington the night before UMA-ABA Capitol Hill Day.



ABA President and CEO Peter Pantuso (right) addresses fly-in participants while UMA President and CEO Stacy Tetschner looks on.



Capitol Hill attendees toast each other during the UBT dinner.



UBT CEO Tony Wei speaks to fly-in participants about the company's motorcoach technology products.



Members of the National Association of Motorcoach Operators pose on the Capitol steps.



Rep. Lou Barletta, R-Pa. (fourth from right), poses with a group of fly-in participants in his Capitol Hill office.



The International Motorcoach Group was one of the national industry associations that sent members to fly-in.

# Canadian consortium testing electric-bus charge system

WINNIPEG, Manitoba — New Flyer Industries Canada celebrated the official launch of the second segment of an electric bus charging trial spanning three communities across Canada — Vancouver, Brampton and York Region.

The Canadian Urban Transit Research and Innovation Consortium (CUTRIC) Pan-Canadian

Electric Bus Demonstration and Integration Trial is the world's first multi-manufacturer interoperability demonstration for fast-charge electric buses.

It involves on-route high-powered charging stations integrating with local utility systems and will test interoperability of electric transit vehicles using a new stan-

dardized high-powered overhead charging system.

Last month's launch event for Ontario's York and Brampton regions followed the Vancouver launch that occurred a few days earlier.

"With this launch, CUTRIC reinforces its industry leadership in technology and further commitment to interoperability amongst

electric buses in Canada," said Jennifer McNeill, vice president for sales and business development for New Flyer and a current board member for CUTRIC.

"As an innovation leader in transportation, New Flyer is proud to have participated in this project. It sets an important foundation for smart mobility, reduced emissions, efficient

operation and heightened collaboration within Canadian public transportation — and establishes Canada as a leader in interoperability."

CUTRIC is a nonprofit consortium founded in 2014 with nearly 100 members representing public and private stakeholders across Canada. New Flyer has been a member of CUTRIC since its inception.

## People

FAIRFAX, Va. — Trailways has announced that five bus and coach drivers from three states have received its highest honor: Driver of the Year for 2017. The names were unveiled at the Trailways annual owners' meeting in Florida.

The awardees were from Alabama, Maryland and New York.

"Normally, Trailways has one or two awardees, but five drivers were nominated for 2017, showing the pride and gratitude of their company leaders. All serve as great role models," Trailways Chairman Jonathan Berzas of Fullington Trailways said.

Trailways' five drivers of the year for 2017 are:

- **Bill Backus, First Priority Trailways** of Maryland

- **Tomas Caminero, Adirondack Trailways** of New York

- **Ed Horn, Pine Hill Trailways** of New York

- **Doug Buffone, New York Trailways** of Rochester, N.Y.

- **Rick Calloway, Capital and Colonial Trailways** of Montgomery, Ala.

MILWAUKEE — REV Group Inc. has announced that

Tom Phillips has rejoined the company as chief operating officer.

As COO, Phillips will work closely with the company's business units to ensure that they are executing on the company's key supply chain, quality, cost and new product initiatives.

Since his return from retirement, Phillips has already been working in conjunction with the

company's finance and business leaders to identify opportunities for further growth, profitability and customer service.

He will assume many of the duties of *Marcus Berto*, executive vice president, who left the company in March.

"I am excited to have Tom back on the REV team full time," said REV Group CEO *Tim Sullivan*.

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## Calendar

### June 2018

**2 Museum of Bus Transportation Spring Fling**, Hershey, Pa. Info: [www.aacamuseum.org](http://www.aacamuseum.org)

**18-21 Pennsylvania Bus Association Annual Meeting**, Doubletree Hilton, Williamsburg, Pa. Info: [www.pabus.org](http://www.pabus.org)

**21-24 New England Bus Association Annual Conference**, Water's Edge Resort & Spa, Westbrook, Conn. Info: [www.newenglandbus.org](http://www.newenglandbus.org)

### July 2018

**22-26 AMA-SCMA-GMOA Regional Meeting**, Evergreen Marriott Conference Resort, Stone Mountain, Ga. Info: [www.gamotorcoachoperators.org](http://www.gamotorcoachoperators.org)

### August 2018

**7-10 International Motorcoach Group Strategic Alliance Meeting**, Doubletree Hilton, Sonoma, Calif. Info: [www.imgcoach.com](http://www.imgcoach.com)

**16-19 2018 NAMO Annual Conference**, Westin Cape Coral Resort at Marina Village, Cape Coral, Fla. Info: [www.namocoaches.org](http://www.namocoaches.org)

# See you in Fort Lauderdale!

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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.

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