

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

New national park fee plan 'as clear as mud'

WASHINGTON — The latest entrance fee proposal from the National Park Service appears to be less onerous than the plan announced last fall, but the details remain as clear as the silty Colorado River gushing through Grand Canyon National Park during spring runoff.

"As one California operator told me, it's as clear as mud," said Ken Presley, the United Motorcoach Association's vice president of legislative and regulatory affairs and industry relations/COO.

Mike Waters, a member of the California Bus Association board of directors, said that when the topic of the park fee proposal came up at a recent board meeting, nobody seemed to know exactly what it meant.

"From what we can tell, we don't think it has any changes as far as it affects bus companies," said Waters, of Pacific Coach Sightseeing and Coach USA in Moss Beach, Calif.

"We still have to apply for a commercial use authorization for every park and pay the entrance fee, which the customer ends up paying. We are still perplexed."

The park service announced in

October that it would double or triple entrance fees at 17 of the most popular national parks to address \$11.7 billion in needed repairs and improvements at the 417 parks across the country.

The parks were visited by 331 million people in 2016.

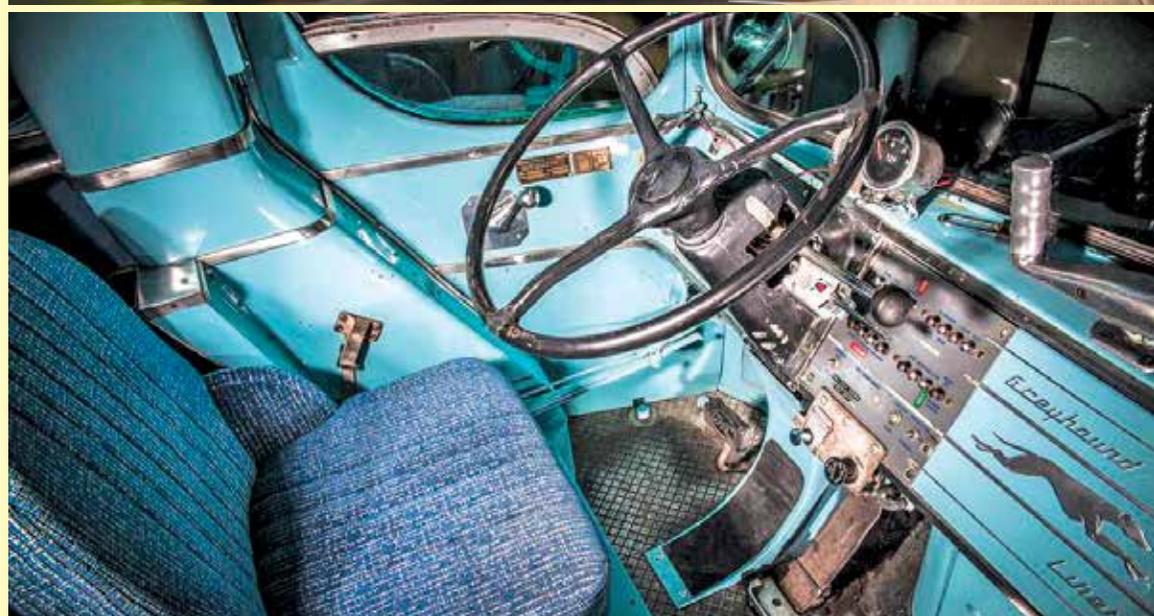
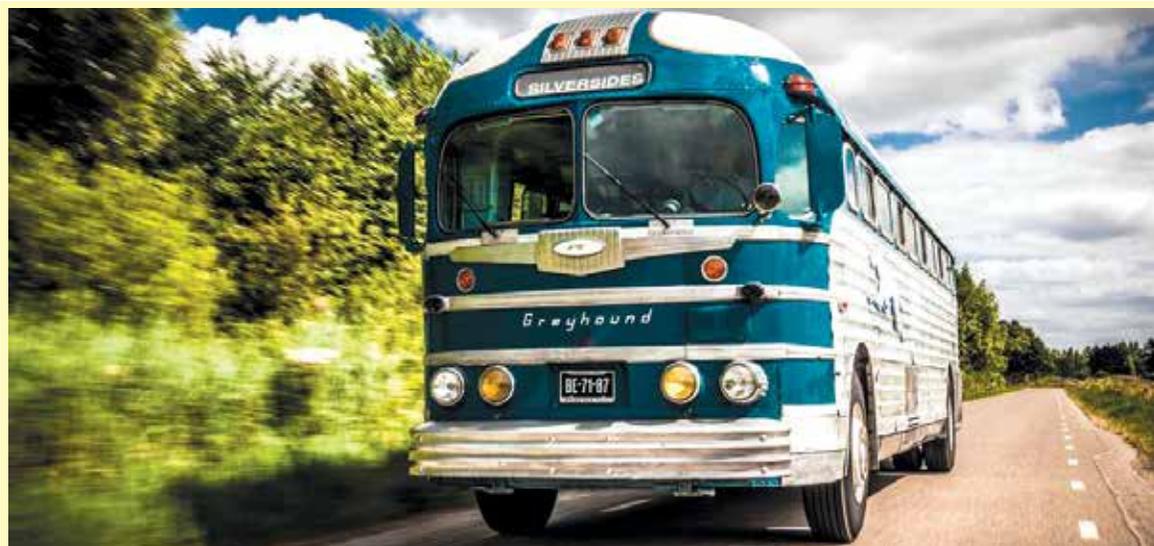
Motorcoach entrance fees would have shot up to between \$900 and \$1,200 at the 17 parks. Fees would have increased to as much as \$70 per private vehicle weekly (now \$25 at some parks), \$50 to enter on motorcycle and \$30 on bicycle or foot.

The park service estimated the fees would have increased park revenue by \$70 million per year, a 34-percent increase over the \$200 million collected from fees in fiscal 2016.

The government received about 110,000 online comments on the proposal. The National Parks Conservation Association said it found that 98 percent of the comments were critical of the proposed hikes.

Many commenters complained that the higher entrance fees were being proposed as the Trump administration's budget for next

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Dutch Bus Collector ElboBus Trailways in the Netherlands has a collection of vintage U.S. buses, including this 1947 PD3751 "Siversides," the nickname for several GM models between 1939 and 1950. See story and more photos on Page 10.

Think tank pushes VMT fee to fund highways, bridges

WASHINGTON — A Washington-based think tank is recommending that Congress consider implementing a fee that would charge drivers for the miles they travel to help fund highway and bridge construction and repairs.

The American Action Forum said charging for vehicle miles traveled (VMT), coupled with congestion pricing to reduce inner-city traffic, would be more ef-

fective than simply raising federal fuel taxes to pay for transportation infrastructure improvements.

"The country's highways and bridges are in dire need of repair," the forum said in a study of ways to shore up the Highway Trust Fund (HTF), a primary source of federal funding for highway and transit projects that is expected to be insolvent by 2021.

"Congress should consider a

combination of user fees to prevent insolvency of the HTF and secure long-term funding for America's roads and bridges," the study said.

"Reforms to the current gas tax will help temporarily. But to secure future revenues, a mileage-based tax and congestion pricing are more appropriate tax schemes for stable, long-term highway funding."

For the past 10 years, highway spending has exceeded HTF revenues, requiring transfers from the general fund. The study suggested that Congress could limit the use of HTF revenues to the repair and expansion of highways, instead of both highways and transit projects.

The Mass Transit Account receives an estimated 16 percent of HTF revenues, and all of these funds come solely from federal

fuel and truck-related taxes, not transit-related taxes.

"While investment in transit is necessary, the gas tax only captures highway use," the study said. "Thus, there is an argument that revenues should only be used for the repair and expansion of highways."

The forum noted that the federal gas and diesel taxes have remained at 18.4 cents and 22.4

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8 ►

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BusRates upgrades website to improve user experience

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Busrates.com just put group travel planning in the fast lane with speed upgrades to the website and a top-to-bottom redesign that produces mobile-friendly and straightforward search results.

The online platform continues to be the leader in matching group travel planners with motorcoach and limousine companies that can fulfill their travel needs. And it's still the number one way for group travel professionals to book directly and save up to 25 percent.

Searching by zip code, state or city, users receive lightning-fast

results presented in a new format that is straightforward, attractive and easy to understand. Each result includes high-quality photos of a provider's fleet, a list of amenities, a company description, relevant reviews and contact information allowing users to easily compare companies.

The improvements will benefit travel planning professionals as well as individuals who have never planned a bus or limousine trip.

"We're so happy to be able to offer this new and improved version of BusRates to both our subscribing companies and our users

who plan travel," said BusRates General Manager Steven Valley.

"We have a loyal base of subscribers and users who asked us to improve our platform to meet their changing needs," Valley said. "Busrates.com took up the challenge and we are pleased to respond with greater functionality for users and subscribers alike.

"Faster and easier is what consumers want and we delivered. Motorcoaches are the safest and greenest mode of transportation and Busrates.com is proud to help the industry to best serve the traveling public," he said.

Users can select any or all of the companies displayed, add them to a shopping cart and, after filling out a simple questionnaire about their trip, hit submit to send a request for quotes (RFQ) to all the companies in the cart. Once the user hits send, the RFQs go out in seconds, not minutes.

The improved user experience also extends to motorcoach and limousine operators who are Busrates.com subscribers whose companies are listed on the site. Behind the scenes, subscribers will find a sleek new interface for managing their company's profile in real time,

an intuitive and user-friendly design, more robust reporting, and fast and secure billing.

Owned by the United Motorcoach Association, BusRates.com offers direct access to hundreds of bus and limo companies. As the leading resource for consumers seeking group travel information, BusRates.com received more than 800,000 visits last year and current projections show it will exceed that figure by 2019.

BusRates.com has revolutionized the way that people can obtain reliable results that save both time and money.

Scott Riccio replaces Michael Neustadt on UMA board

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The United Motorcoach Association has welcomed a new member to its board of directors and bid farewell to a long-term volunteer leader.

Scott Riccio of Northeast Charter and Tour Co., Inc., in Lewiston, Maine, has been named to a seat on the board representing Region III, the Northeast.

Riccio replaced Michael Neustadt of Coach Tours, Ltd., in Brookfield, Conn., who recently

announced his retirement.

Nineteen members of the 21-member UMA board are regional directors who must be coach operators and who are elected to three-year staggered terms from the three regions of the U.S., plus a single director elected from Canada.

In addition, there are non-coachbuilder and coachbuilder associate-board representatives who also serve three-year terms.

In other UMA news, the association recently asked its members to vote for a change in its bylaws.

The proposed amendment to the bylaws would modify the coachbuilder representation on the UMA board. The change would allow greater representation of the coachbuilder members within the industry on the board without re-apportioning the voting structure originally established for the association.

These individuals would be considered *ex officio* (non-voting) members of the board and would appoint one individual to cast a vote on behalf of the entire group. This also would allow the highest-level sponsors of the association to be present at the association's business meetings and share insights they may have gathered throughout the country.

Voting ended May 30 and the



Scott Riccio Michael Neustadt

results will be reported in Bus & Motorcoach News and in the UMA member newsletter.

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FMCSA to delay medical certification rule three years

WASHINGTON — A new system meant to streamline communication between state licensing agencies and federal regulators regarding commercial drivers' medical certification status likely will be delayed for three years.

That means a rule that would have eliminated the need for drivers to carry their medical cards beginning this month also will be placed on hold.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration blamed the delay on the hacking of the National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners late last year.

FMCSA said the Medical Examiner's Certification Integration final rule, scheduled to take effect June 22, would not require compliance until June 22, 2021.

The national registry, down for more than four months, is "depen-

dent upon the implementation of information technology infrastructure that will not be available on June 22," FMCSA said.

The integration rule would require FMCSA to electronically transmit to state licensing agencies the results of drivers' medical certifications once exams have been completed.

Digital filing

The agency receives the information from medical examiners, who, beginning June 2, will be required to upload to FMCSA the results of exams by midnight the day after they're completed.

FMCSA would then be required to send those results to state agencies, which would then have to send the results to the Commercial Driver's License Information System to make other states aware

of drivers' exam results.

Those reporting requirements are now on hold for three years.

Despite the delay, examiners will still be required to upload driver exam results by midnight the next day starting this June 2. In addition, examiners will continue issuing paper medical certifications to drivers, and drivers will still be required to provide their license-issuing state with their medical certificate as proof of certification.

FMCSA said it "has reluctantly concluded" that it will not be able to electronically transmit medical examiner's certificate information from the national registry to state agencies, nor will those agencies be able to electronically receive the information from the national registry for posting to the Commercial Driver's License Information System.

FMCSA cited an incident that occurred in December 2017 that caused it to take the national registry offline, leading to interruptions in the development of the electronic transmission process.

The agency said delaying the compliance date for three years would "ensure that the (state agencies) have sufficient time once the final specifications are released to make the necessary information technology programming changes."

Carrying copies

The rule also would have removed the requirement that drivers carry a physical copy of their medical certificates beginning 15 days after issuance. That requirement will now remain in effect.

Drivers also are required to self report their certification status to their state licensing agency, a

requirement that has been in effect since Jan. 30, 2012.

FMCSA is accepting public comment on the rule delay through June 26.

Meanwhile, FMCSA told a major trucking publication recently that although the online registry remains down, health care professionals still can get listed on the registry and licensing agencies and employers are still able to check the validity of medical cards.

FMCSA has yet to identify the nature of the registry breach, nor has it predicted when it might return to functionality.

"FMCSA is ensuring the stability of the National Registry site, the security of the data, and the privacy of drivers and medical examiners," an agency spokeswoman said in a statement. "This is of paramount concern."

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Deficit prompts N.Y. town to eliminate transit service

AMSTERDAM, N.Y. — Financial woes have caused the Amsterdam Common Council to eliminate the city's transit system.

The council voted to amend the city charter requirement for public transportation, a decision that came after audit reports found a department deficit that at times has topped

\$200,000. The city as a whole is facing a \$5 million deficit.

"This wasn't an easy decision because it affects our citizens who really need it the most," Amsterdam Mayor Michael Villa said. "But we have to weigh every factor that's going to impact the entire city."

The Albany Times-Union re-

ported that Amsterdam's buses were averaging 60 riders a day, 20 of them bound for Albany.

Council members said the city's financial deficit was inherited from the previous administration.

"We did not know what the true numbers were," Villa said.

"We hired an outside accounting

firm, and for the first time in seven or eight years we're current in our financials, but when you turn the light on it's scary."

Councilman William Baaki said a decreasing population has further hurt the city's finances.

"The downsizing of the population and tax base necessarily

leads to the downsizing of government, and the mayor has proposed (public transportation) as likely the first of many downsizings," Baaki said. "The transition period won't be without difficulties."

Many residents are unhappy with the council's vote.

Nancy Rad, community schools coordinator for the Greater Amsterdam School District, said in a letter to the council that eliminating the transit system will hurt students who need rides to school and to afterschool jobs.

Villa and the council members said they were sympathetic to the needs and concerns of the residents who use the bus, but Villa said they were "put in a position where there were no other options."

Council members are hoping a local private company would step up and provide bus services for residents.

Nashville voters reject transit plan

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Nashville voters overwhelmingly rejected a plan to pay for a \$5.4 billion mass transit system that called for a 26-mile light-rail system, bus improvements and a downtown tunnel.

The \$5.4 billion plan would have included five light-rail lines, an overhaul of the bus system, 19 neighborhood transit centers, sidewalks, bike lanes and synchronized lights.

The plan would have been funded by increases in sales, business, rental car and hotel taxes. And while the capital costs of the project were pegged at \$5.4 billion, the total cost was expected to reach \$9 billion with added debt and maintenance costs.

A mix of liberals and conservatives, combined with outside interests, rejected the plan. Opponents said the measure was too costly and would not alleviate traffic congestion, and said the light-rail component was outdated.

Some feared the plan would increase development and gentrification in a rapidly growing city that is already pricing people out because of the rising cost of housing. Some advocates for affordable housing came out against the measure.

Backers of the plan had hoped that more people would vote for it because of the city's daily traffic snarls. Nashville was recently named the 27th most congested city in America by transportation analytics firm INRIX.



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Man pleads guilty in scheme to run bogus bus companies

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Xiu Chang Zheng (Ah Sen), former president of Apex Bus, pleaded guilty to conspiracy charges in U.S. District Court in Harrisburg.

Zheng admitted that he conspired to make materially false statements on commercial carrier forms regulated by the Federal Motor Car-

rier Safety Administration.

He was indicted in March 2016, along with 13 other individuals, for his role in a multi-state scheme to fraudulently operate commercial passenger bus companies All-State Travel Bus, Asia Tours, Apex Bus, New Egg Bus and Universe Bus.

VMT fee

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

cents, respectively, since 1993. Neither tax is indexed to inflation, meaning each year since 1999 the purchasing power of revenues from the taxes have generally been decreasing.

While groups have warmed to the idea of increasing the fuel tax, there is concern over the sustainability of the gas tax to support highway spending.

Skeptics of raising the tax point to increased fuel efficiency of vehicles and the development of alternative fuel vehicles as threats to future gas consumption – and thus to the sustainability of the tax itself. Cars today require less fuel than ever before.

That has resulted in proposals to implement a mileage-based user fee as a financing mechanism to replace the traditional gas tax. Rather than taxing motorists for every gallon of gas purchased, the mileage-based tax would charge motorists a fee for every vehicle-mile they travel.

Oregon was the first state to pass a law implementing a mileage-based user-fee program to pay for its transportation system. Prior to implementing the mileage-based program, Oregon piloted the user-fee program twice before, once in 2006 and again in 2012.

Under Oregon’s current program, a driver contributes 1.5 cents for each mile driven, regardless of rural or urban location or the vehicle’s fuel efficiency. Pilot programs have also begun in California, Colorado, Hawaii and Washington. Nine other western states have begun researching implementation of a mileage-based tax.

“Implementing a mileage-based tax in place of the current gas tax would help to restore stability to the HTF,” the study said. “Vehicle miles traveled have been growing at a greater rate than motor fuel use since the gas tax was last raised.”

The forum also suggested the use of congestion pricing, which

aims to reduce rush-hour traffic by incentivizing commuters to use other transportation modes such as carpools, biking and transit, or to travel during off-peak hours.

This incentive is typically created by varying toll prices based on demand. Depending on the time of day or the amount of traffic on the road, tolls increase or decrease accordingly.

“Other industries apply the same principle behind congestion pricing,” the study said. “Airlines charge higher prices during the holidays when more individuals will be flying. Similarly, hotels charge higher rates for rooms when there is an event or convention in town because the demand is higher.”

The study concluded that a mileage-based tax is a more stable alternative to the gas tax, but said immediate implementation of a federal mileage-based tax is unrealistic in the short term.

“While Congress may be eager to implement the user fee, states cannot make a change to a tax scheme that is not yet fully developed,” the study concluded. “Given that the HTF is estimated to become insolvent in 2021, a mileage-based tax will not address imminent funding issues. And neither the mileage tax nor the gas tax addresses the costs associated with congestion.

“In order to address the HTF solvency problems (both short and long-term) and capture costs associated with congestion, Congress should consider a combination of user fees. To keep the HTF solvent in the short-term, Congress should consider a gas tax increase (along with indexing).

“Although a mileage-based tax is more effective at securing reliable highway funding, the HTF will become insolvent before any such tax can be implemented nationally. To secure the necessary funding for infrastructure investment until the mileage-based tax can be fully implemented, Congress should look at ways to improve the existing gas tax.”

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Dutch Trailways operator collects U.S. buses

By Dave Millhouser

HEINO, Netherlands — Sprinkled across the U.S. are a number of opportunities for bus enthusiasts and industry veterans to see the industry's heritage on display.

For those who have families that aren't quite as fired up about such a specialized road trip, there is a unique opportunity to combine a "bus man's holiday" and a European vacation.

Dutch operator ElboBus Trailways is home to a remarkable collection of vintage American coaches, with a number restored and operating. Ranging from a 1947 GM Silversides PD3751 and a PD4103 all the way to a 1982 MC9, Elbo's antique fleet showcases North American bus technology from the end of WWII through the 1980s.

According to company owner Martyn Besselsen, the name Elbo is an acronym for "Enige Leuke Bus Onderneming" or "Only Nice Bus Company."

In the 1960s, Besselsen's dad, Co, started a camp dedicated to giving underprivileged children the opportunity to spend time outside the city. In 1969 he bought a used coach to transport kids to the camp but wasn't allowed to operate because he lacked required permits.

Rather than quit, he bought a small six-bus operator in Leid-schendam, Holland, and ultimately moved it to Heino.

Elbo currently runs a modern fleet of coaches that offer tour and charter services. Besselsen is proud of the fact that 30 percent of Elbo's business still comes from the camp. In addition, they operate an activity center and dinosaur park. That amounts to a special kind of diversification.

Besselsen said he "grew up between the buses," often joining his father on trips and helping his uncle who did all the maintenance in the early days.

In the early 2000s, Elbo was



Volvo salesman Piet Tijssen, left, hands over the "key" to a new motorcoach to ElboBus Trailways owner Martyn Besselsen. Also pictured are Besselsen's son Colin, daughter Eleni, wife Karin, father Co, and dog Ella.



A 1975 "Fishbowl" transit bus is among the vintage vehicles in the ElboBus collection. Fishbowl was the nickname for a number of GM transit buses between 1959 and 1986 because they had six-piece fishbowl windshields.

approached by Trailways and became an enthusiastic member, in part because it was doing a lot of work for American groups. In addition to serving tourists, the company does a thriving business with universities, churches and the military.

About the same time Elbo joined Trailways, Besselsen noticed that American groups were on a tight budget and decided that school buses might be a way to save them money and make things interesting.

In short order, Elbo had 12 yellow buses and found them in demand for lots of local trips.

While searching for "yellow buses" on eBay, Besselsen stumbled across an antique Silversides, and with one click, he owned a bus in California.

"It was quite an adventure to get it here and a lot of work to get it ready," he said. "We were used to school buses that you could drive directly from the ship. But finally we got it restored very beautifully and it looks amazing."

The rest is history (pun intended), and along with Elbo's fleet of modern coaches, it now owns 10 vintage North American buses, including the iconic Big Dog, an operable Scenicruiser.

Elbo's current roster of antique North American buses includes:

- 1947 Silversides PD3751 7235
- 1952 Red Ghost (bus historian Bob Redden's old bus) GM PD4103 1355
- 1956 GM PD4501 832 Scenicruiser

- 1962 GMC PD4106 907
- 1975 GMC T6H4523A1376 Fishbowl
- 1977 GMC P8M4905A1617 Buffalo
- 1977 GMC P8M4905A1737 Buffalo Automatic
- 1978 MCI MC8
- 1979 MCI MC9 S14537
- 1982 MCI MC9 37235 (ex-Navy)

In addition, Elbo has a number of interesting antique European coaches, including the open top bus that was carrying the Dutch royal family during an unsuccessful terrorist attack in 2009. Its modern fleet just added two new Volvo coaches

Bear in mind that Elbo Trailways is a busy modern bus operator, so if you are planning on traveling to Europe, it would be worthwhile to contact Besselsen and arrange a visit. You may be able to trick your family into going, or sneak off while they explore stuffy old cathedrals.

You can reach Elbo at <http://trailwayseurope.com>.

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Private-sector involvement could help public transit

By Dave Millhouser



A young driver was high-balling across Chicago's west side at the wheel of a semi when his trailer clobbered a low overpass. He was nearly in tears as he telephoned his company.

"We need that sucker fixed fast," said his boss. "Don't feel too bad, Chicago is famous for this sort of thing. The Fruehauf Trailer dealer is nearby. Get it repaired and get back on the road."

A day later Fruehauf had worked its magic, and the anxious young driver rocketed out of the lot headed for the highway.

BAM! He nailed the same overpass from the other side.

You might wonder where such a hapless driver could find work in transportation today. He might be a fit for New York's MTA, in light of a recent New York Post article, "MTA buses were in more than 21K collisions in just 3 years."

That's 7,000 per year, and

MTA has about 5,700 buses, so each of them needs to hit something every 10 months just to pull its statistical weight. Our guy could help.

New York is a tough traffic environment, and not all these incidents were either major or preventable. But 21,000? During that period more than 2,500 people were injured, with 14 killed.

According to the Post article, bus drivers call MTA dispatch, not the police, following accidents.

Personal injury lawyer Keith Sullivan is quoted as saying, "They'll send people to the scene to mount a defense before the injured victim is even loaded into the ambulance."

Whenever a politician suggests "privatizing" any government service, the response is predictable: Private-sector businesses aren't as altruistic and won't put the public's comfort, safety and well-being first.

Gee, how's that working out here? Don't forget that it's not just its own customers that MTA is injuring at an average of over 2.5 a day, but also collateral damage within range of buses gone rogue.

There are lots of excuses. Having driven a coach frequently in New York, I know how difficult it is. But 21,000 accidents and 2,500 injuries?

Ben Franklin once said, "He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else." I didn't hear Ben say it, but it sounds like him.

We will certainly be told it is our fault because we don't give them enough money to fix things. Gee whiz, current MTA management, politicians and unions all inherited this sad state and lack the resources to climb their way out of the hole dug for them.

Who dug the hole? That's the point. On the public side of things, people are rarely held accountable. Kicking the political can down the road is an art form that enables folks to escape before their bad decisions bubble to the surface like a broken sewer pipe.

There's no incentive for long-term thinking, only for looking good until another job pops up or the pension(s) kick in.

For a number of years there was a transit executive who had the toughness and ability to "fix"

things. Everywhere he went, things got better in relatively short order -- then he'd be fired. Solving problems meant he offended the triad: management, politicians and unions.

He'd end up moving on, and repeating the cycle. He was a hired gun.

The "triad" never considered what was best for the public long term.

If we allowed more involvement by private-sector companies, could they possibly make it worse? (Go back to the paragraph about how MTA handles accidents.)

Is it worth trying? Not a ton to lose. We're not talking about the "public/private partnerships" that are really corporate welfare. Every time the private company goes over budget, politicians find ways to funnel them more money.

It wouldn't be surprising if those same companies donated to campaign funds. Just sayin'.

Vendors bid artificially low because they know that the politicians will wink and pay for overruns. It's win-win. The announced cost is politically acceptable and the supplier gets its money down

the road.

Does anyone know where (or who) the luminaries were that signed Boston's \$2.8 billion Big Dig deal and sold it to the taxpayers? The one that actually cost more than \$14 billion for a poorly built tunnel?

Don't look for them on the welfare roles. Do you think, for a nanosecond, they believed \$2.8 billion was a "real" estimate?

Honest private-sector involvement isn't difficult to understand. If an operator offers to run a route for \$100, that's what he gets. Bid \$1,000 to dig a tunnel and that is exactly what your paycheck will read.

Then your motivation is accurately evaluating cost and risk, because YOU are gonna eat your mistakes. The public gets the truth about what a project or service will cost.

Seriously, 21,000 accidents? Ask yourself what would happen to a private carrier with stats like that.

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

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Park fees

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

year cut park spending by \$400 million.

Tourism industry leaders expressed their views in a February 5 meeting at the U.S. Department of the Interior, which includes the

park service. Those attending the meeting included UMA President and CEO Stacy Tetschner, National Tour Association President Pam Inman and American Bus Association President and CEO Peter Pantuso.

Tetschner said the group stressed that charter and tour opera-

tors would need at least 18 months to work any fee increases into their planning and marketing. The latest proposal fulfills that request.

In response to the overwhelming negative feedback, the park service announced that it was formulating more reasonable fee increases. In a somewhat complicat-

ed advisory, the service announced a "Standardization of Commercial Use Authorization Process for Operators of Road-Based Commercial Tours" that would become effective October 1, 2019.

The advisory states, "All road-based tour operators must apply for and obtain a commercial use authorization (CUA) for every park in which they plan to provide tours."

As in the past, chartered motorcoaches are intended to be exempt from the CUA.

Each CUA will cost \$300 and will be non-refundable.

Rather than charging a set fee per bus, the new fees will be assessed on a per-passenger basis.

"For parks charging entry fees, the tour operator will pay an entrance fee equal to the appropriate per-person entrance fee for each passenger upon entry to each park; \$5 of the fee paid upon entry for each passenger will cover the CUA management fee. Tour operators will not need to pay any additional per person fees.

"For parks without entry fees, the tour operator will submit \$5 per passenger CUA management fee with the annual report at the end of the operating season."

Under the new proposal, personal entry fees will be set at \$10 to \$20, depending on the park that is visited. Those fees currently range from \$7 to \$15. The latest proposal drops the previous call for peak-season pricing at the 17 selected parks.

Fees will not be reduced for bus passengers who also hold annual or lifetime park passes.

Waters said that based on his understanding of the proposal, "That is certainly a reasonable amount."

William Allen, president of Amador Stage Lines of Sacramento, Calif., said it doesn't appear that fees are increasing all that much.

"The people in the bus are paying it, not the bus company, but it is going to make the trip less desirable," said Allen, a member of the UMA board of directors.

Allen carries groups to Yosemite National Park, one of the most popular destinations in the U.S.

"I am sympathetic with the parks because they have so much deferred maintenance and they are over-run with people," he said.

"Yosemite is very special, so people will continue to go. They have gotten a real good deal over the years but it has not been an economical thing for the parks, which is why they have such huge deficits. They can't have a free lunch forever."

When the new rules take effect late next year, tour operators still will be required to file a CUA application for every park they may visit in the coming tourist season. The parks currently impose their own permitting processes and fees.

"The lack of uniformity and deference to each park is ridiculous," Presley said. "It's one park system."

Waters said the industry hasn't figured out what they will be doing for the application fees.

"It still looks like we have to file with every park," he said. "We have been trying to get them to offer a common pass for all the parks. Nothing has changed."

One of the new requirements for operators is "submitting mandatory annual CUA reports after each CUA operating season (but not more frequently than once a year)."

Until October 1, 2019, "Individual parks may require road-based commercial tour operators to obtain a CUA to conduct operations in a park. In those cases, parks must use the standard forms but the fees may vary from the standardized process set out above. Road-based commercial tour operators should visit the NPS CUA webpage to stay informed of individual park requirements until the standard process is implemented."

About two-thirds of national parks currently do not charge entrance fees. The new park service advisory is a bit unclear about the ramifications for tours entering those parks, but CUA and entrance fees may be required after 2019.

Motorcoaches and buses carry 2.1 percent to 29.2 percent of visitors to the most popular national parks, according to annual reports filed by the parks. The park annual reports posted on the park service website are not formatted uniformly and most do not identify vehicle types.

The National Park Conservation Association says visitors to all national parks spent \$16.9 billion last year. That supported 295,000 jobs and \$11.1 billion in payrolls in communities near parks.

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Calendar

June 2018

2 Museum of Bus Transportation Spring Fling, Hershey, Pa. Info: www.aacamuseum.org

18-21 Pennsylvania Bus

Association Annual Meeting, Doubletree Hilton, Williamsburg, Pa. Info: www.pabus.org

21-24 New England Bus Association Annual Conference, Water's Edge Resort & Spa, Westbrook, Conn. Info: www.newenglandbus.org

Prevost 2018 Factory Training draws record attendance

SAINTE CLAIRE, Quebec — The 2018 Prevost Factory Training program in Quebec City attracted 55 mechanics and technicians from throughout North America, the largest turnout since the program began 18 years ago.

Every year since 2000 the Prevost Field Service Department and the company's team of regional customer support managers have sponsored a week of intense maintenance training for mechanics and technicians who work on Prevost motorcoaches.

"Prevost has always taken a very direct, hands-on approach to maintenance training," said Robert Hitt, the company's director of aftermarket training for North America.

"We relate directly with our customers' mechanics and technicians who do the work on our coaches back at their shops," Hitt said.

The training enables participants to build on their technical and diagnostic insight, review recent product developments and strengthen their own networks with other Prevost operators across North America.

The event set the pace for subsequent training sessions that take place at select Prevost Service Centers over the coming year.

"These coach mechanics bring their unique perspective in knowing just how to fix a problem once they've determined the cause," Hitt said. "Their job takes a particular type of person who can get the picture and then dig in to fix what's not working. The way we see it, these sessions also allow us to learn from the very people we train."

Before getting down to business, first-day activities included a guided tour of the Prevost factory, a visit to the newly-opened Prevost Museum for a look back on the company's history, and some time to enjoy Quebec City. The week concluded with an awards dinner that recognized the three top-scoring attendees.

During that time, with books, agenda, contacts for the week and safety gear in hand, this year's group of mechanics attended their pre-selected one- and two-day classes over four days of hands-on training with two Prevost instructors assigned to each class.

"We employ our regional service managers for this training, as they are our product experts," Hitt said. "These are the go-to guys with the answers and solutions to all technical questions that arise."

The Prevost Factory Training 2018 curriculum included:

- **Prevost electrical** – Prevost Multiplex and PRIME systems operation and diagnostics; onboard

diagnostics and troubleshooting; and schematic familiarization

- **HVAC systems** – Component identification, HVAC controls, troubleshooting and system diagnosis

- **Volvo drive train** – Volvo D13 emissions and engine evolu-

tion; PTT advanced diagnostics and troubleshooting; sensor location and ECU communication; and valve adjustment and maintenance.

- **Pneumatic braking systems** – Pneumatic system overview; system operation; maintenance and function; valves and opera-

tion; and Bendix Knorr caliper

- **Electronic Stability Program** – Automatic brake system and adaptive cruise braking

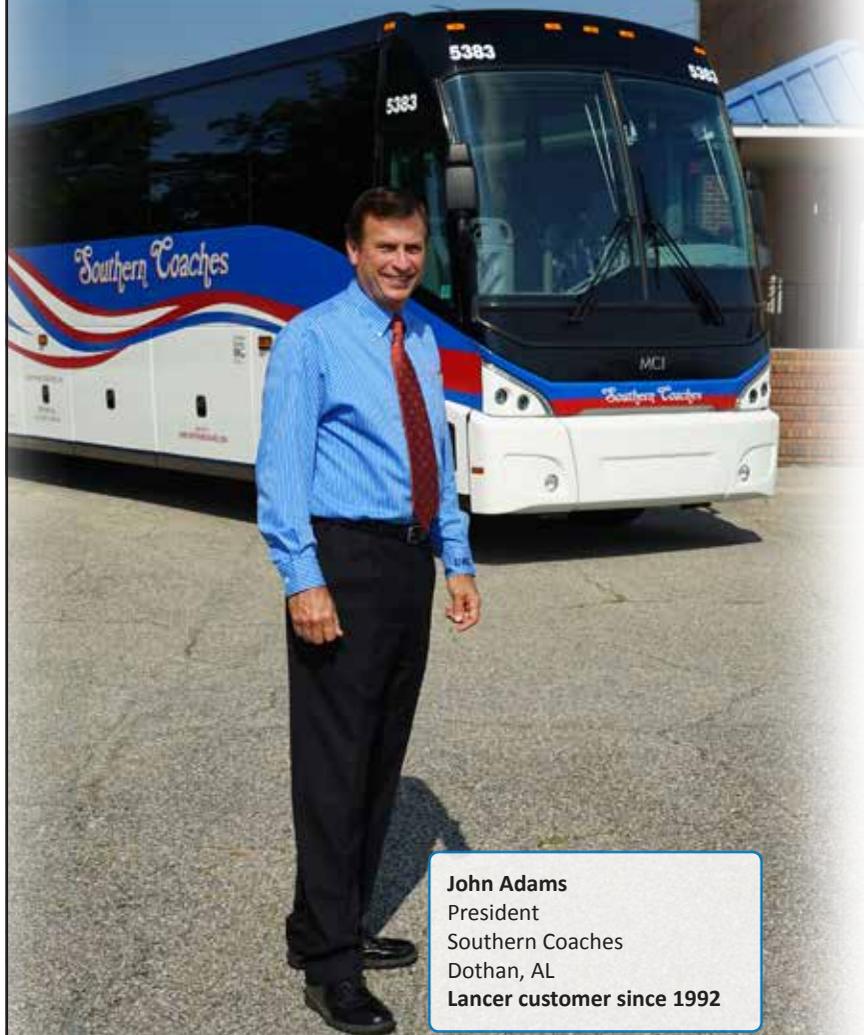
- **Accessory pneumatic system** – Suspension, kneeler, entrance door, high buoy and low buoy

- **Transmission** – Allison trans-

mission diagnostics, troubleshooting and recommendations for replacement, and I-Shift transmission familiarization and troubleshooting

- **Greenhouse gas** – Changes to emissions, engine and coach systems, and electric fan drive and charging system

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