

# Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

## Crowdsourcing bus trips is 'the world we live in today'

Passenger carriers have vehicles. Passengers have trips. Matching them creates business.

The modern business model uses software and technology to create business transactions for everything from pizza delivery to cab rides.

A variation, "crowdsourcing," attempts to aggregate a lot of people interested in traveling to the same place at the same time —

enough to fill a bus, for example.

"We have two concepts," said Axel Hellman, transportation planner for OurBus."

First, he said, "We are a platform that helps people crowdsource commuter bus routes. If there are a lot of people who want to set up a transport service, they pull together on our site. If it reaches the point that the route is feasible, we match it up with a

charter company."

Second, Hellman said, "We give the buses the technology to do multiple lines of business at once."

Crowdsourcing could assume a growing portion of the business of the motorcoach industry, said Tom McCaughey, president of Flagship Trailways in Cranston, R.I.

For three years he has been fielding motorcoaches for event-

based trips arranged by Rally, the New York City-based "crowd-powered travel" provider.

"It's the world we live in today. I guess you'd call it the shared economy," McCaughey said.

"When I was a kid, the most important thing in the world was getting a driver's license. My kids drive, but they also ride the bus and ride the train. We have a lot of young Millennials riding buses."

Flagship Trailways has filled up to eight coaches for Rally trips to major music concerts and sporting events in the northeastern U.S. It also contributed eight of the 800 buses, supplied by 135 operators, that Rally crowdsourced for the Women's March on Washington in January. Those coaches carried 48,000 women.

"I have three buses going to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 ►

## ABC planning electric buses, Van Hool U.S. assembly plant

WINTER GARDEN, Fla. — An unexpected slump in the first quarter left ABC Companies with "a good year but not a great year" in 2017, but optimism nonetheless flourishes at ABC facilities across the country.

ABC President and CEO Dane Cornell said the company has its biggest-ever backlog of Van Hool motorcoach deliveries for the first half of 2018, expects to start electric motorcoach deliveries in 2019 and anticipates the opening of a Van Hool assembly plant in the U.S. within 24 months.

ABC will sell about 1,000 new

and used motorcoaches in 2017, down from 1,150 last year, Cornell said. It has sold motorcoaches from Belgian-based Van Hool for 30 years.

"There was a very slow start to the year. It was hard to pinpoint," he said. "I believe operators were refreshing their fleets at a good pace over the last three to four years and there was just a bit of a pause in the first quarter. Carrier consolidations led to excess vehicles on the used market and there wasn't the demand that there had been in the past."

Cornell said ABC hit its

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**The BusBoys Vintage Bus Rally** in Evansville, Ind., showcased the largest fleet of vintage buses ever assembled in North America and attracted an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 individuals, including area residents, bus nuts and bus industry enthusiasts from across the U.S. and Canada, and from as far away as Australia and Hungary. See story and photos starting on Page 15.

## New York is the place to be during the holiday season

NEW YORK CITY — The Big Apple is popular to visit year-round, but like a Radio City Rockettes dance move, it kicks into a higher gear during the holidays.

For motorcoach operators trying to find a place to park, fuhgettaboutit — it's a 45-foot challenge — but they take their guests where they want to go. And New York City is the place to be.

"The attractions of New York are year-round, but you can tell easily that Christmastime is one of the

busiest times of the year just from the traffic," said Michael Neustadt, co-owner of Coach Tours, which operates a business office in Brookfield, Conn., and garage in Carmel, N.Y., north of the city.

He estimates Coach Tours easily sends a couple dozen buses into the city each week during the holidays.

People love to see the Rockettes (their "Christmas Spectacular" show runs Nov. 10-Jan. 1), the tree at Rockefeller Center, the mu-

seums and Broadway shows, and his company is happy to oblige, Neustadt said.

One thing Coach Tours does year-round, but especially during the holidays, is promote trips to lesser-known attractions because of the crowds and traffic in midtown Manhattan.

It offers, among other things, a "slice of pizza tour" of Brooklyn, taking guests to popular restaurants, pizza parlors and neighborhoods of the up-and-coming bor-

ough. It also has tours to the Bronx, including an Italian neighborhood with great restaurants, shops and bakeries, as well as the New York Botanical Garden in the Bronx and the Bronx Zoo, which have a number of indoor attractions that time of year, he said.

The Botanical Garden has remarkable Christmas decorations in the main greenhouse, he said.

"So there are lots of other things," Neustadt said. "If it sounds like I'm promoting outside

of midtown, I am. I think there's a lot more to do and putting yourself in Times Square the weekend before Christmas is a wonderful, exciting thing, but it has its issues because of the crowds."

That's tough on clients and operators trying to navigate traffic, and parking is especially challenging.

"But I don't want to degrade New York City at all," Neustadt said. "It is my favorite city in the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8 ►



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# CVSA members elect new leadership team for 2017-2018

GREENBELT, Md. — The Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance transitioned to its new leadership team for the 2017-2018 term during the CVSA Annual Conference and Exhibition in Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada.

The new leadership team is led by:

- **Capt. Christopher Turner** of the Kansas Highway Patrol — president

- **Capt. Scott Carnegie** of the Mississippi Highway Patrol — vice president

- **Sgt. John Samis** of the Delaware State Police — secretary

Julius Debuschewitz of Yukon Highways and Public Works, CVSA's immediate past president, will be unable to serve his term. Per the alliance's bylaws, the board of directors shall be comprised of the three most recent past presidents able to serve.

As a result, previous past presidents Sgt. Tom Fuller of the New York State Police and Deputy Chief Mark Savage of the Colorado State Patrol have each agreed to serve one more term as past president.

Turner, the new CVSA president, has served in law enforcement for 20 years and manages the Kansas Highway Patrol's Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program, motor carrier inspectors fixed/mobile weight enforcement and crash reconstruction teams.

He has served as chair of both the CVSA Election and Finance committees, vice chair of the Programs Initiatives Committee (now the Policy and Regulatory Affairs Committee) and vice chair of the Adjudicated Citations Ad Hoc Committee.

Turner has moderated several technology forums for CVSA and

served as a region member of the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators' Law Enforcement Standing Committee and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's Performance Standards, Measurements and Benchmarks Working Group.

Carnegie, the new vice president, has been with the Mississippi Highway Patrol for 24 years and is currently the director of the Motor Carrier Division. He leads multiple aspects of Mississippi's commercial motor vehicle enforcement and operations programs, which include commercial driver's license, information technology, compliance investigations, safety audits, and outreach and enforcement operations.

He also served as the CVSA Region II vice president and is the current chair of the CVSA Finance Committee. Carnegie recently

completed his term as chair of the CVSA Election Committee and served on an ad hoc committee on training-related issues and actively participated in strategic planning for the future of the alliance.

Samis, the new secretary, has been with the Delaware State Police for 24 years and is currently the Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program supervisor of its Commercial Motor Vehicle Unit. He served as the CVSA Region I vice president for two years and as president for the past two years.

Samis is the incoming chair of the CVSA Election Committee and has been a member of the Finance Committee for the past two years. He attended CVSA's yearly leadership meetings in Washington, D.C., for the past four years and was an active participant in developing the alliance's strategic plan.

Other CVSA leadership changes include:

- **Sgt. Scott Dorrler** of the New Jersey State Police is the Region I president.

- **Sgt. Eric Bergquist** of the Maine State Police is the Region I vice president.

- **Capt. John Broers** of the South Dakota Highway Patrol is the Region III president.

- **Capt. John Hahn** of the Colorado State Patrol is the Region III vice president.

- **Lt. Daniel Wyrick** of the Wyoming Highway Patrol is the Region IV vice president.

- **Sean Mustatia** of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure is the Region V vice president.

- **Maj. Chris Nordloh** of the Texas Department of Public Safety is the Size and Weight Committee Chair.

## IMG now offering its members customer-service training

LENEXA, Kan. — The International Motorcoach Group has formed a partnership with the International Tour Management Institute to give IMG members an opportunity to receive ITMI training in customer service excellence

### Stagecoach Group sees revenue gain

PERTH, Scotland — Stagecoach Group has reported that Coach USA/Coach Canada and megabus.com had slightly higher revenue during the first four months of fiscal 2018.

Coach USA/Coach Canada, along with megabus, are subsidiaries of Perth-based Stagecoach Group and the largest operator of motorcoaches in North America, with a fleet of roughly 2,300 buses. (No. 2 Greyhound Lines has a fleet of 1,600 coaches.)

Combined Coach USA/Coach Canada and megabus revenue for the four months ended Aug. 31 was 0.8 percent higher than during the same period a year ago.

The gain came despite a 4.4 percent slide in revenue at megabus. Stagecoach noted, however, that revenue per vehicle mile at megabus remained "broadly stable."

Revenue for the four business lines that make up Coach USA/Coach Canada — charter, scheduled commercial and contract services, plus sightseeing and tour operations — posted a combined revenue increase of 3.1 percent for the four-month period. Stagecoach noted that business "continues to show some signs of improvement."

at exclusive IMG discounts.

"IMG is proud to launch this new training partnership with ITMI," IMG President Bronwyn Wilson said. "We value the opportunity to utilize ITMI's extensive experience in the tour and travel industry to offer their exceptional customer-service training for our members."

ITMI CEO Ted Bravos said that while all drivers receive continuous safety and driving skills training, "we have recognized that there is an

opportunity to teach the effective handling of people-related issues to increase professional behavior. The ITMI training helps the driver identify areas for enhancement such as understanding the psychology of group travel, the critical nature of the drivers' interpersonal communication and problem-solving skills, maintaining a positive attitude and keeping their cool."

The training also will help build brand recognition, increase driver morale and retention and

give tips for handling the challenges of long-distance travel.

ITMI has been a leader in the training and certification of travel and tourism professionals for more than 40 years. For the past decade, ITMI also has developed and delivered customized training and certification for motorcoach drivers.

For more information about the IMG training please visit: [www.itmitourtraining.com/img-customer-service-training](http://www.itmitourtraining.com/img-customer-service-training).

IMG is a North American network of motorcoach operators with 57 member companies operating more than 7,000 vehicles that provide transportation to more than 21 million charter and tour customers.

Its member companies vary in size, region and diversity of business models with a range of offerings, including bus charters, escorted tours, limousines and school buses. IMG is an invitation-only organization.

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# THE DOCKET

## Raymond Martinez nominated as administrator of FMCSA

WASHINGTON — Raymond Martinez, chairman and chief administrator of the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission, has been nominated by President Donald Trump to be administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

If confirmed by the Senate, Martinez would replace acting administrator Daphne Jefferson, who has been heading FMCSA since Scott Darling resigned as administrator in January when Trump took office.

Martinez will be joining

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

FMCSA also is reviewing several pending rules affecting the motorcoach and trucking industries to meet the Trump administration's call for reducing burdensome federal regulations.

FMCSA employs more than 1,000 people in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and its primary mission is to reduce

crashes, injuries and fatalities involving large trucks and buses, according to the agency.

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

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

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

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

Earlier in his career, he served on numerous White House advance teams for domestic and international trips of presidents Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush. During the Reagan administration, he was deputy director for scheduling and advance for

First Lady Nancy Reagan and also served as a special assistant at the New York Regional Office of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Martinez earned a law degree from St. John's University School of Law in New York and a bachelor's degree from Long Island University's C.W. Post College, where he later taught public administration.



Raymond Martinez

## \$70 million in CMV grants awarded to states, schools

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has awarded more than \$70 million in grants to states and educational institutions to enhance commercial motor vehicle safety.

"Our shared goal of a safer transportation system is a top priority," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao. "These grants will further assist state and local officials in their efforts to prevent commercial motor vehicle crashes and injuries each year, and

have the potential to save hundreds of lives.

"In addition, the department is proud to recognize the sacrifices of our nation's heroes by providing more veterans with the opportunity to contribute to the safety of our roadways through training grants for the next generation of commercial drivers," Chao said.

The following grants were awarded:

- \$41.5 million in High Priority (HP) grants to enhance states'

commercial motor vehicle safety efforts, as well as advance technological capability within states

- \$30.7 million in Commercial Driver's License Program Implementation (CDLPI) grants to enhance efforts by states to improve the national commercial driver's license (CDL) program

- \$1 million in Commercial Motor Vehicle Operator Safety Training grants to nine education institutions to help train veterans for jobs as commercial bus and

truck drivers.

The High Priority grant program consists of HP-Commercial Motor Vehicle grants designed to provide financial assistance to state commercial vehicle safety efforts. It also includes HP-Innovative Technology Deployment grants that provide financial assistance to advance the technological capability and promote the deployment of intelligent transportation system applications for CMV operations.

"Safe drivers lead to safer roadways, and safer roadways ensure that our loved ones return home at the end of their journey," said FMCSA Deputy Administrator Daphne Jefferson.

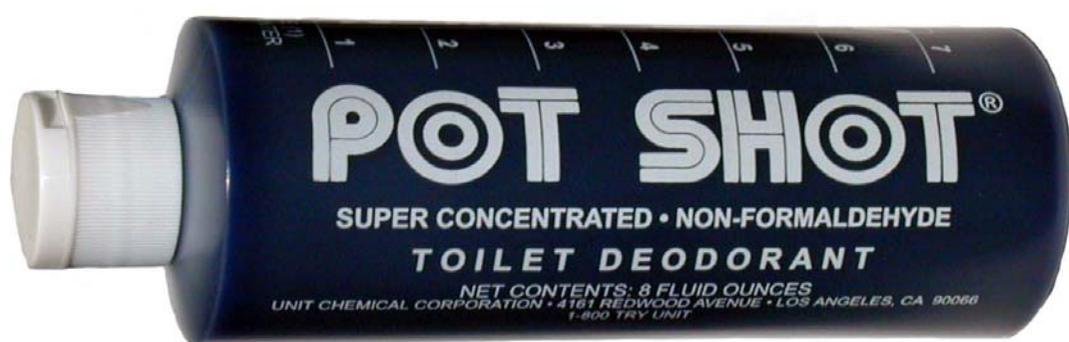
"These grants will help ensure that our state partners have the tools and resources they need to support FMCSA's mission of reducing crashes, injuries, and fatalities involving large trucks and buses."

A full list of this year's HP grant awardees can be found at <https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/mission/grants/hp-cmv-grant-recommendation-summaries-2017>.

The Commercial Driver's License Program Implementation (CDLPI) grant program provides financial assistance to states to achieve compliance with FMCSA regulations concerning driver's license standards and programs.

Additionally, the CDLPI grant program provides financial assistance to other entities capable of executing national projects that aid states in their compliance efforts, which will improve the national CDL program.

The goal of the national CDL program is to reduce the number and severity of commercial motor vehicle crashes in the United States by requiring states to conduct knowledge and skills testing before issuing a CDL, maintain a complete and accurate driver history record for anyone who obtains a CDL, and impose appropriate disqualifications against any driver who violates certain offenses.



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# Sen. Schumer wants letter safety grades posted on buses

NEW YORK CITY — Calls for new safety regulations on charter buses following a deadly crash in Queens have spread to the federal level, with an influential senator calling for operators to post safety ratings on bus windshields.

U.S. Sen. Chuck Schumer of New York, the Senate Democratic leader, is urging the federal government to change a 2012 bus safety rating law to include a letter grading system for buses.

Under that law, bus companies have received one of three safety ratings — satisfactory, conditional or unsatisfactory — from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

Schumer wants those ratings converted to letter grades — A, B and C — and the grades posted on bus windshields similar to the grades required by New York City in the windows of bars and restaurants.

Schumer joins several other New York politicians who have called for increased regulations following a September crash involving a charter bus and city transit bus. Three people died in the crash, including the charter bus driver, a

passenger on the transit bus and a pedestrian.

The Dahlia Group, which owns the charter bus accused of causing the crash, has a checkered safety

record, and the driver had been fired from the New York transit agency after receiving a DUI in another state.

The New York state senate re-

cently released a report showing that nearly half of the private charter bus companies in New York City had unsafe driving violations, with some of them having safety

ratings worse than Dahlia.

That led Schumer to release a statement calling for enforcement of the safety rating law.

“On the heels of the terrible Dahlia crash and new information that shows there are other bad actors out on the streets, some worse than Dahlia, your gut reaction is to ask what more can be done to prevent these kinds of crashes and improve the culture of safety,” Schumer said. “But in this case, we have a law I passed in 2012 that can not only help solve this problem, but can better inform the public, too.”

“That is why I am asking the federal Department of Transportation to hit the gas on a federal letter-grade system for private bus companies. The companies that spend money to ensure a culture of safety will rise to the top, and the bad actors who disregard the value of safety and human life will fail to survive unless they improve.”

Despite its past safety violations, the FMCSA website rated Dahlia as “satisfactory” for safety based on recent compliance reviews. That would equate with an ‘A’ under Schumer’s proposed grading system.

## UMA urges restraint on crash regulations

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Following a fatal crash in New York City involving a charter bus and a transit bus, several entities, politicians and government agencies called for adding regulations, increasing inspections and other activities that could be detrimental to the motorcoach industry.

The United Motorcoach Association believes that such actions likely would not have prevented such an unfortunate accident.

The United Motorcoach Association President and CEO Stacy Tetschner recently sent a letter to U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao stressing the industry’s outstanding safety record and encouraging regulators to hold off on any new actions until a full report on the crash is completed.

Tetschner also reiterated UMA’s longstanding commitment to working closely with USDOT on

issues of importance to its members and the motorcoach industry.

Here is a transcript of the letter:

Dear Secretary Chao:

The United Motorcoach Association members, leadership, and staff are deeply saddened by the recent tragic events involving a motorcoach in New York City.

While it is tempting to speculate and overreact to these incidents, true safety professionals readily agree that we must be patient while the experts investigate the accident and determine the probable cause and contributing factors.

The longstanding safety record of the diverse operations found in the motorcoach industry, combined with an extremely low fatality rate, demonstrates an overwhelming commitment from the

professionals that work in the industry, regulatory bodies, and enforcement personnel.

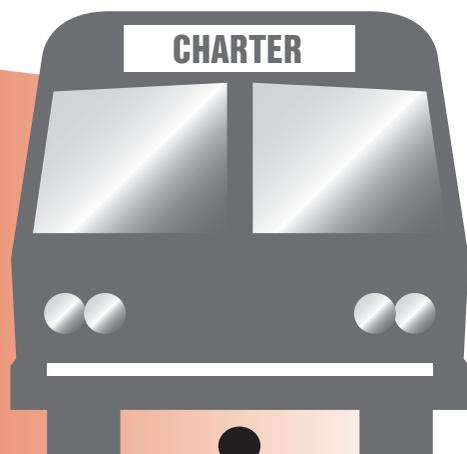
It is our hope that under your tenure as Secretary of Transportation, the many professionals at USDOT that shape policy and regulations can share in these accomplishments and work closer with the industry to find solutions that mitigate the possibilities of future crashes, absent the burdensome process of additional regulations and expense of increased enforcement.

As always, the professionals at the United Motorcoach Association stand ready to work with the Department of Transportation agencies.

Sincerely,  
Stacy Tetschner  
President and Chief Executive Officer

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## New York City

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

whole world, it's my birthplace, and it's the best to go to see almost anything you could imagine."

According to NYC & Company, the official destination marketing organization of New York City, the city's holiday season begins with the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in November, continues with the iconic Christmas tree lighting ceremony at Rockefeller Center and is capped by the dropping of the ball in Times Square on New Year's Eve.

Throughout the season, each borough welcomes multicultural guests to participate in local observances of diverse holidays, NYC & Company said in a news release announcing upcoming 2017-18 holiday attractions. Secular activities include department store windows, artisanal markets, plus attractions and cultural draws.

The season concludes by welcoming in the New Year with fireworks at Prospect Park in Brooklyn and the New Year's Eve ball drop in Times Square.

"New York City is a sight to behold during the festive annual holiday season — it's a time of year when world-class hotels, attractions and shops sparkle and shine brighter, offering six million global visitors a truly memorable travel experience," Fred Dixon, NYC & Company's president and CEO, said in the release.

Dennis King, president of King Ward Coach Lines in Chicopee, Mass., about three hours north of New York City, said he has about 90 percent of his fleet, or about 20 buses, in the city during the first two weekends in December.

Most trips are charters with groups that love to go down for shopping and shows, with the company offering a morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up, often after dark so passengers can see



The dropping of the ball in Times Square on New Year's Eve caps a number of events held during the holiday season in New York City, making the Big Apple a popular destination for motorcoach tours. © NYC & Company/Julienne Schaer

the lights on the way out, he said.

King Ward also offers retail trips that include Radio City Music Hall shows with the Rockettes.

This year, King Ward is doing two, which are already sold out. Retail tours also include New York City "On Your Own" trips. Both pack-

ages include escorts.

"The biggest issue we have down there ... is no place to park," King said. "They want us to come

down and they want the business, and they want buses to come there, but ... the city isn't cooperating with us. Get us some designated parking. That's probably the biggest concern we have about going into the city."

West Point Tours Inc., a Trailways company, takes about 400 trips a year into New York City, about 75 of those during the holidays, said Robert Brisman, owner and president of the charter operator in Vails Gate, N.Y., about 50 miles north of the George Washington Bridge.

"The tree, Rock Center, the skating rink and Radio City are absolutely huge, as well as shopping along Fifth Avenue, which is right along that area," Brisman said.

Julie Cotthaus, West Point's charter manager, also mentioned the Botanical Garden and Bronx Zoo, plus the festively decorated store windows like Macy's.

The New York Botanical Garden also does an annual Holiday Train Show, this year starting Nov. 22 and running through Jan. 15, 2018. It will feature G-scale trains traveling through New York scenes and landmarks made of bark, leaves and other natural materials, according to its website.

A Brooklyn neighborhood noted for its Christmas lights, Dyker Heights, also is a popular place to drive through during designated viewing times, Cotthaus said.

Also popular for visits that time of year are the Museum of Modern Art, American Museum of Natural History and Repertorio Español, they said.

They, too, cited the parking and traffic.

"Parking in New York City is a major problem," Brisman said.

For trips to Rockefeller Center, Cotthaus said, "a lot of times we're dropping several blocks away and the people are aware that they do have to do some walking, especially that time of year."

## Popular holiday attractions in N.Y.

NEW YORK CITY — Operators planning trips into the city over the holiday season should check out the 2017 Holiday Motorcoach Operator's Guide, available here: <http://files.constantcontact.com/5967e079001/fdfaea93-52d1-4e93-a94f-1bc0c9bbd918.pdf>.

The following is a list of Big Apple holiday attractions (provided by NYC & Company):

- **91st Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade** — Nov. 23 ([macys.com](http://macys.com))
- **Rockefeller Center Christmas tree lighting ceremony** — Nov. 29 ([rockefellercenter.com](http://rockefellercenter.com))
- **Christmas Spectacular Starring the Radio City Rockettes** — Nov. 10-Jan. 1 ([rockettes.com](http://rockettes.com))
- **Brookfield Luminaries in**

**the Winter Garden at Brookfield Place** — Nov. 30-Jan. 5 ([brookfieldplaceny.com](http://brookfieldplaceny.com))

- **WindowsWear Fifth Avenue window display tours** — Between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve ([windowswear.com](http://windowswear.com))

- **16th Annual Holiday Train Show at Grand Central Terminal** — Nov. 16-Feb. 4 ([grandcentralterminal.com](http://grandcentralterminal.com))

- **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's holiday performances** — Nov. 29-Dec. 31 ([alvinailey.org](http://alvinailey.org))

- **Volez, Voguez, Voyagez — Louis Vuitton** — Oct. 27-Jan. 7 ([vuv-new-york-louis-vuitton.com](http://vuv-new-york-louis-vuitton.com))

- **ELF The Musical at the Theater at Madison Square Garden** — Dec. 13-29 ([theater-atmsg.com](http://theater-atmsg.com))

- **The Metropolitan Opera's The Magic Flute** — Nov. 25-Jan. 9 ([metopera.org](http://metopera.org))

- **Metropolitan Museum of Art Exhibit of the Crèche** — Nov. 21-Jan. 7 ([metmuseum.org](http://metmuseum.org))

- **The New York City Ballet's The Nutcracker** — Nov. 24-Dec. 31 ([nycballet.com](http://nycballet.com))

- **New York Botanical Garden's Holiday Train Show** — Nov. 22-Jan. 15 ([nybg.org](http://nybg.org))

- **Holiday Workshop Weekend at Wave Hill** — Dec. 9-10 ([wavehill.org](http://wavehill.org))

- **Brooklyn Ballet's Nutcracker** — Dec. 7-9, 11 and 13-16 ([brooklynballet.org](http://brooklynballet.org))

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# Taking things for granted can cut a coach career short

By Dave Millhouser

On a November Saturday morning we were on a mission when we converged on the lot where our used coach inventory was parked.

Every bus was started, and the antifreeze checked, so nothing would freeze in the winter.

I was working with my pal Oakie when we waddled up to a Scenicruiser and it refused to crank. Why jump-start it when you can wrench the parking brake off and push it with another bus? What could go wrong?

Sitting in the drivers seat, I stepped on the clutch, shifted into first, and waited for Oakie to gently nudge me from behind. He doesn't do "gentle," so the Scenic commenced an energetic roll.

Popping the clutch, I awaited the lurch and roar signifying the engine had started and was building air.

Nada. It was a stealth bus rolling quietly downhill towards a gaggle of its bussy buddies parked at the bottom of the lot.

Well, it wasn't that quiet. I was crying and yelling for my momma.

After steering around the other coaches and coasting to a stop, I rolled under the bus to find that it had no drive shaft. Turns out that a couple of months before we had taken the shaft off that coach and sold it to a customer whose u-joints pooped out.

Both Oakie and I were involved in that sale, and managed to forget about it. Between the two of us, there was insufficient brain matter to avert potential disaster.

Gee whiz, every other time I'd gotten in a bus it had a drive shaft, so I figured this one did, too.

In a recent article in *Metro* magazine, Steve Mentzer wrote about a concept called "practical drift." If I understood it correctly, he made the point that "we are all prone to drift away from the correct or proper way of doing things."

There's tons of good stuff in the article, but my big takeaway was that after a while, barring an event of some sort, we begin to take things for granted.

We take shortcuts because we've checked this gizmo a billion times and it's been OK, so why keep checking?

'Just because something is usually OK doesn't mean we shouldn't stay alert.'

Sometimes we give it a cursory look, assuming it's the same as always, and convince ourselves all is well.

It's not just mechanical stuff. If you pass a blind driveway a thousand times and there's never anything there, the temptation is to do a quick glance and assume nothing's coming.

On the rare occasion that a car pops out you yelp, "Where the heck did that come from?" (Or a four-letter variant.)

This concept may be part of the reason why drivers' safety performance tends to steadily improve with experience in their first couple of years, but then peaks and begins to go backwards unless there is intervention in terms of additional training.

Experience can be good — or bad. There's a balance between

"I've seen this before and am ready for what's likely to happen" and "that low tire pressure indicator has given me a bunch of false alarms, so it must be lying now."

Years ago while evaluating a bus that was going to be traded on a new one, something seemed amiss. It turned out that what felt like poorly adjusted brakes was no brakes at all on the tag axle.

The operator's solution to ruptured diaphragms was to remove the spider, chamber, drums and shoes. An astute guy wouldn't have assumed everything was there, or maybe run it over the pit first.

Just because something is usually OK doesn't mean we shouldn't stay alert. It's good to periodically remind ourselves of that. When a reporter asked Captain Smith (before he took command of the Titanic) to describe his 40-year career, he said "uneventful."

Back in the day an Eagle with an 8V71 and an Allison transmission was the bus version of a dragster. A customer's lease had ended and he had dropped one off at our remote lot.

Randy and Slap drove me there

so that I could fire that baby up and move it to our facility. Heck, it was only a 5-mile trip, so a pre-trip inspection seemed excessive (and beyond my skills).



Dave Millhouser

Pulling out, I noticed a gasoline truck barreling down the highway toward me, but gee, this bus was a rocket. Why wait? Stomping the throttle, I whipped across the road just before the truck roared past — and my engine stalled.

It turns out that even checking the oil would have revealed that the miscreant operator had limped in on a supplemental electric fuel pump, which he took home with him. It ran until the fuel in the heads was exhausted, and quit.

Hard to count how many mistakes I made on this single event. I nearly left the industry in a blaze of glory.

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





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# ABC planning S.F. Bay Area parts-and-service center

NEWARK, Calif. — ABC Companies plans to open a parts-and-service center early next year in Newark, just 15 minutes from the company's Redwood City operation in the greater San Francisco Bay Area.

The new location at 7980 Enterprise Drive will serve employer shuttle operations and tour, charter and commuter operators of all sizes and fleet profiles throughout the region.

The Newark location is on the east side of the San Francisco Bay and offers easy access to custom-

ers via Route 84 and Interstate 880.

"We recognize the ongoing growth of this market and we're eager to expand our reach by offering robust fleet support services, as well as everyday drive-up service to any fleet operator in the region," said Jon Savitz, ABC senior vice president for service operations.

The new facility is part of the company's strategic vision of offering the broadest range of fleet services to cover every aspect of operations — and ultimately providing a truly one-stop experience

for customers.

"Providing all the resources for fleet support in one state-of-the-art location will make ABC a more effective business partner for customers in the Bay Area as well as the northern California region," said Roman Cornell, ABC chief commercial officer and executive vice president.

"We are excited to enable our customers to better leverage our technical expertise and parts supply chain to improve their fleet operations and accelerate repair and service turnaround times."

Situated on three-plus acres, the 30,000-square-foot facility will offer:

- Two acres of secure, well-lit parking.
- State-of-the-art diagnostics, maintenance, collision and repair, and vehicle care with 14 service bays; axle alignment and complete tire service and balancing; and full paint booth and body shop
- A modern, comfortable driver's lounge featuring Wi-Fi, work areas, large screen TV and pool table
- A 6,000-square-foot dedicat-

ed parts warehouse and distribution center offering ABC's expansive parts inventory available for counter pickup and shipping

"In terms of parts distribution and access, we think customers will be delighted with this new location," Cornell said. "Along with OEM Van Hool parts and accessories, customers can order every popular make and model SKU and expect fast delivery and efficient turnaround time for in-shop repairs."

Construction is underway and ABC is planning to open the facility in the first quarter of 2018.

## ABC's future

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

second-quarter projections, had a decent third quarter, "and we are looking to finish the fourth quarter strong, but I don't think our total-year projection will catch up on the first-quarter's slowness. We are not going to be too far off. I would summarize this as a good year but not a great year."

The diversity of Van Hool offerings expanded with the introduction of the 35-foot CX35 a year ago.

"We have a broad range in our product line — we have a good mix of double-decks, CX35s and the two 45-foot single-deck products," Cornell said. "We have a pretty diverse customer base. We've been able to get a few operators over the last few years to give us a try. Now

they are buying from us, so we've added to our customer base."

In addition to the CX models, ABC also sells 40- and 45-foot versions of the Van Hool TX luxury touring coaches and the 45-foot, double-deck TDX motorcoaches that seat 81 passengers.

As for the orders booked for delivery in 2018, "about 65 percent are the 45-foot single decks," Cornell said. "The CX35 and the double-decks make up the rest."

ABC and Van Hool have tapped into the market for employee shuttle buses operated by tech companies in northern California, Washington, Oregon and some other areas.

"Our Silicon Valley customers are growing their employee bases and a percentage of them are riding the shuttle buses," he said. "That portion of the business is

growing."

As for the traditional charter and tour business, he said, "That market is still there, but I think there are more opportunities, and I think operators are looking for contract service work. I think that will be a growth area. I don't know if the new coach market will grow that much, but I think it is stable. We might see 2- to 3-percent growth next year over this year."

Values of pre-owned motorcoaches are victims of operator consolidation and the lack of new entrants, Cornell said.

"Our industry is going through a little bit of transformation on the pre-owned market due to the fact that the industry, from a business standpoint, is not growing. There are not a lot of places to go with used vehicles that operators are trading in," Cornell said.

"I think we are going to go through somewhat of an adjustment on pre-owned valuations and how pre-owned vehicles are viewed over the next year or two."

Van Hool and ABC are excited about the prospects for electric shuttle and commuter coaches, he said.

The companies made a formal announcement during the APTA Expo in Atlanta last month of plans to equip the CX45 coach with an electric drive system manufactured by Proterra of Burlingame, Calif.

"We are going to start with the 45-foot coach, which will be called the CX45E. That vehicle will be introduced at the end of 2018 with deliveries beginning in 2019," Cornell said. "We will develop alongside that the CX35E."

Electric vehicles could account

for "a double-digit percentage of what we sell in the shuttle applications. On the shuttle services you have designated routes, you know the distances and terrain, the load capacities and all the things that factor into how long a vehicle can run on a charge," he said. "We are hoping to have them meet the 'Buy America' guidelines in the near future so we can get into the public-transit market with them."

That would be made possible by the next optimistic road sign facing ABC Companies.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12 ►

## ABC's Jeff Backer dies

SAN CLEMENTE, Calif. — Jeff Backer, a sales executive with ABC Companies, passed away after a valiant battle with cancer. He was 63.

Backer started with ABC in March 1999 as parts manager in the company's former location in Garden Grove, Calif.

Over the course of his 18-year career with ABC, he held various positions in the parts and sales departments at ABC's California locations as he continued to grow within the company.

In 2011, Backer was promoted to senior account manager. He most recently covered Arizona, Utah, Southern Nevada, and the Central Valley and San Jose, Calif.

Barker was very close to his customers as he spent weekends and vacation time with many of them. He was a "surfer dude" who loved the ocean. His positive outlook throughout his illness was an inspiration to all who knew him.

Barker is survived by his friends and family, including his two daughters, Cassie and Stacey (husband David) and his granddaughter, Grace, who was the love of his life.

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## ABC's future

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

"Our partner Van Hool is in the final phase of selecting a city to build a 'Buy America' plant in the U.S.," Cornell said. "We expect that plant to be up and running within the next 24 months or less."

Vehicles produced in that plant would qualify for purchase by public-transit systems and other government agencies that receive federal transit funding. The electric coaches also are attractive to many companies that operate employee shuttles.

"The tech companies are looking for technology that is cleaner, quieter and more efficient. They're always looking for the next best thing," Cornell said. "There also are public-transit agencies that have similar desires."

Other technological advances waiting over the next hill will improve electronic monitoring and servicing of motorcoach systems, he predicted.

"I think we are going to see more real-time diagnostic monitoring from the home base or satellite bases where the operator can see how the vehicle is performing and what it is costing to operate and can monitor malfunctions," he said.



ABC Companies and Van Hool have announced plans to equip the Van Hool CX45 coach (pictured) with an electric drive system manufactured by Proterra of Burlingame, Calif. The electric coach, to be named the CX45E, will be introduced at the end of 2018 with deliveries beginning in 2019.

"The base will be able to communicate with the drivers to let them know what the issue is and what to do. If it is a software issue, it might be possible to fix it remotely."

A cross-country network of parts and service facilities allows ABC to promise parts deliveries

anywhere in the continental U.S. within 24 hours. The company operates shops in Jersey City and Camden, N.J.; Winter Garden, Fla.; Costa Mesa, Calif.; Grand Prairie, Texas; Faribault, Minn.; and Sombra, Ontario.

A Muncie-Baker replacement

parts subsidiary is based in Muncie, Ind.

A Redwood City, Calif., center supports employee shuttle transportation in the Bay Area.

ABC is preparing another service shop in Newark, Calif., on the east side of San Francisco Bay be-

tween Oakland and San Jose. That garage will service motorcoaches operated as employee shuttles by private businesses.

"We have about 450 coaches that are under contract maintenance service for a variety of tech-based companies," Cornell said. "That is why we are adding the Newark location. It is going through a remodel phase right now and will open in the first quarter of 2018."

ABC is continuing work at its Florida facility on a five-year contract to refurbish up to 120 MCI D4500 motorcoaches for the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority, which operates commuter services for 13 counties in metropolitan Atlanta.

That shop also is refurbishing 23 MCI D4500 motorcoaches for the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission that serves communities about 25 miles southwest of Washington, D.C.

"We have cautious but optimistic views of next year as far as new coach sales go," Cornell said. "We are optimistic about the next five years as far as we are headed with our technology, our products and bringing online a plant that will allow us to compete in the market for public-transit agencies and private customers."

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UNITED MOTORCOACH ASSOCIATION

# The key to marketing is the drip, drip, drip of repetition

By Christian Riddell  
Motorcoach Marketing Council



Christian Riddell

Erosion is a pretty strange way to start a marketing column, but let's be honest — it's probably not as strange as tomatoes.

I was recently driving from the Pacific Northwest to my new home in south Texas and my GPS decided to take me on a scenic tour of the Southwest. We went through every small town for what seemed like a year.

During one leg of the journey, we drove through the red-rock country of southern Utah and into New Mexico. If you haven't been, it is worth seeing. Spectacular red vistas contrast the blue skies and tans of the desert floor, but perhaps the most amazing features are the area's spires, arches and other amazing rock formations.

They are magical and cause one to pause and wonder how, in the middle of that flat, arid landscape, these extraordinary structures came to be.

The other thing that seems so remarkable about these stone canyons is their seeming perfection. Every edge appears smooth and rounded. There are no seams or joints; rather, it's as though each rock melts into the next.

These incredible formations were not, however, created by machines or earthquakes, fault lines or engineers; they are the work of drops of rain.

Roughly 65 million years ago, rains began to fall in what scientists believe was a relatively featureless desert of dry seabed. But with every drop of rain, microscopic amounts of sediment began to be stripped away.

As each layer eroded, the rain began to be more and more effective in its ability to shape the face of the landscape. Today, as you stand in Devil's Garden or below the majesty of Delicate Arch, you can admire the work of billions of individual drops of rain that have carved these masterpieces from plains of solid sandstone.

These natural wonders were not created in a single rainstorm; we can't point to a solitary event that made them. There was no single drop of rain one can attribute all that beauty to, and it's the same thing with marketing in our companies.

Our marketing plans must in-

clude constant drops of activity that carve our future success from the rocks of our potential markets.

Today's world is an instant gratification landscape. If I want a tomato, I go to the store and buy a tomato. If I want to learn how to

Marketing Minute  
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play a song on the guitar, I can find a video on YouTube where someone will teach me that particular song, right now, sitting in my underwear on the couch on a Sunday afternoon. If I want more laundry detergent, I click a button and it'll

be on my doorstep tomorrow. In many ways, waiting has largely become a thing of the past. While this has some pluses, it can also cause some problems.

If we hire recently graduated

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14 ►

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## Marketing Minute

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

liberal arts majors to wash buses on the weekends, for example, they sometimes seem to think they should be the CFO by the end of the month. (Not all waiting is sunshine and roses.)

It used to be that if you wanted a tomato, you had to grow one. For most of our recorded history, that was business as usual. But let's get real right now. If, in today's world, the only people who ate tomatoes were those who could grow them, we'd probably find more of them in the Museum of Natural History than anywhere else.

Marketing is really no different than tomatoes or Delicate Arch in Moab, Utah. Both require a significant investment of time and repetition. No one would expect to be able to simply squirt a rock with a hose for a few minutes and end up with Delicate Arch.

In the same way, no one would think it plausible to stick a seed in the ground in the morning and plan on a Caprese salad for dinner.

But here's one of the biggest concerns I have: as I work with operators around the country on their marketing, many are figuratively

spraying rocks looking for arches and planting tomato seeds with an evening harvest in mind.

In many of these organizations, marketing is more about an event than a constant drip that brings with it the power, over time, to shape the future of the company.

Drip marketing, by its very name, is descriptive. Its core objective is to continually "drip out" information and content that keeps your message on the minds of the buying public via social media, emails, your website, events and other avenues.

The council recently launched what we call our "Do It For You" marketing services. These are tools and services designed to help make marketing easier by eliminating a lot of the time constraints that come with doing marketing in a motorcoach operation.

While this product has been successful, it has also made the need for more education on the importance of ongoing, consistent, drip-style marketing more apparent. Those tiny drips of marketing water can start to create, over time, the majesty you are looking for.

I often use the example of a guy who opens up a new pizza restaurant in your local neighbor-

hood. Imagine that he went to the post office, pulled a list of all of the surrounding homes, and sent everyone a postcard with a picture of a pizza on it and a coupon for free bread sticks.

Would it work? Probably, to some extent.

Inevitably, some of the people who got that card in the mail would be hungry right then and wondering to themselves, "What am I going to feed the kids for dinner?" They'd pack up, get pizza, and cash in on the bread sticks.

In most households, however, it'd likely get tossed in with the other 350 pieces of junk mail. Bottom line? By and large, people would not be beating down the door, jumping up and down, or running around screaming about the fact that there's a new pizza place in the 'hood.

Receiving a postcard once would probably not get you to run out and buy a pizza from the new guy, and if he sent you a postcard once, six months ago, you probably won't even remember his name if you sit down to order a pizza today.

But if you were to sit with him and talk about his marketing efforts, he'd probably tell you about

his postcard experience as the last big thing he did.

Marketing is about creating additional demand for your product, and as much as we would love to say that a one-and-done strategy could work, the truth is not so simple.

Building market share is about staying at the top of our consumers' minds. We don't know when they'll really be craving pizza, but when they do, we want to be the first thing they think about.

Of course, in the motorcoach world, we may not ultimately care when our customers want pizza, but we definitely care about when they want to book transportation.

We put a lot of stock in customer loyalty as an industry, but we forget that part of loyalty is our responsibility. We look at loyalty like it is the job of our customers to remember us, who we are, what we do and how to get in touch with us.

In actuality, studies show that companies that better communicate with and market to their customers foster more loyal consumers.

So how do we increase demand for our product, hire more drivers and firm up our pricing? We drip market.

We recognize that sending out 100 postcards a month is more effective than sending out 1,200 once. We recognize that posting to our Facebook page on a daily basis is more effective than once a week.

We understand that the more frequently we can be in front of the people we are marketing to, the more often they will think of us in the moment they're going to make a purchasing decision.

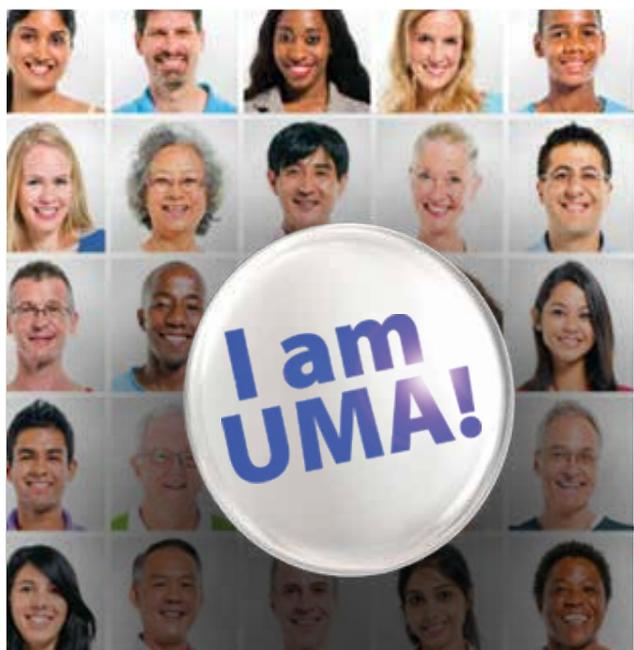
When we market, we want the net result to be that when people call, they say things like, "I see you guys everywhere." We want people calling to work with us because we are their transportation provider.

We want to put brokers out of business because people are not shopping for a bus; they are shopping for our bus.

This can happen, but it will only happen if we embrace the concepts of erosion marketing and learn to drip, drip, drip, drip. And if you need help starting that drip, the Motorcoach Marketing Council has great tools, training and resources.

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

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# The BusBoys Vintage Bus Rally outdistances expectations

EVANSVILLE, Ind. — To anyone who has ever watched one of the nearly two-dozen different automobile restoration programs aired on the Velocity cable television channel, it's a familiar story:

A son or daughter has inherited dad's worn, neglected, 1950s, 60s or 70s classic car. To honor dad and his memory, the family wants the vintage auto restored to its former glory, perhaps even improved with a modern, reliable, high-output engine; better stopping power with disc brakes; and a glistening paint job dad only could have imagined in his dreams.

The bus industry equivalent of such stories was on display for three days in late September when The BusBoys Vintage Bus Rally rolled into this Ohio River town.

The rally, which by all accounts exceeded most everyone's expectations, showcased the largest fleet of vintage buses ever assembled in North America.

Although the rally received only spotty local media attention until the last day, when it was splashed across the bottom half of the front page of the Evansville newspaper, hundreds of area residents joined bus nuts and bus industry enthusiasts from across the U.S. and Canada, and from as far away as Australia and Hungary, at the event.

One story that fit the Velocity-channel mold was the 65-year-old school bus brought to the show by Voigt's Bus Service, a motorcoach and school bus operator based in St. Cloud, Minn.

A crash in 1952 knocked out one of the two school buses then operated by company founder Norb Voigt. A replacement was needed in a hurry, so Voigt went to the local Chevrolet dealer and purchased a new Steelcraft school bus built on a Chevy chassis.

For the company anniversary a few years ago, Voigt's son, former company President Darwin "Butch" Voigt, decided to replicate the "first, new school bus" operated by his late father and the Voigt company.

With support from Butch Voigt's son, current company President Troy Voigt, and a handful of employees, the result was a pristine school bus that could not have looked any better 65 years ago.

There were other restored, equally-as-handsome school buses at the Evansville rally, including a 1968 Ford school bus with a Superior body brought by Trobec's Bus Service of St. Stephen, Minn., and a 1948 International KB6 school bus owned by Hogleund Bus Co. of



Dan Holter

Stan Holter

Monticello, Minn. The stunning Trobec's and Hogleund buses were award winners at the show.

Dan Shoup of Cardinal Buses in Middlebury, Ind., drove a 1965 General Motors model 4106 that his father, John, purchased new. The good-looking original, unrestored coach has 800,000 miles on it with one in-frame engine overhaul.

Because it had been a while since the 52-year-old bus had been on an extended road trip, Dan Shoup white-knuckled the coach the 345 miles from Middlebury to Evansville — and back.

The three-day rally was organized by The BusBoys Collection, a Minnesota-based nonprofit that is thought to own and operate the largest collection of vintage buses in North America.

In addition to being the principals of The BusBoys Collection, brothers Dan and Stan Holter are motorcoach company owners and operators based in Bloomington and Rochester, Minn.

At least 85 buses of all descriptions traveled to southwest Indiana for the rally, and an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 individuals, possibly more, flowed around and in the buses during the three days of the rally.

"Our flea-market vendors reported having excellent sales due to the large number of spectators," said event co-sponsor Stan Holter. "Food-truck vendors also reported good sales, again, given the large attendance.

"Our vintage bus rides were a real hit with nearly every trip sold out. Had we anticipated crowds as large as they were, we could have added more buses/trips to accommodate more wishing to ride," said Holter.

"It all worked out better than planned," continued Holter. "Before the rally was even over, I had been approached by local businesses, the Southwest Indiana Chamber of Commerce, local residents, and even a few people from other parts of the country, asking me to not only bring this event back, but to bring it to their city.

"We continue to receive rave reviews — from those who attend-

ed in one capacity or another — as to how well they thought the rally was planned and executed. So, naturally it has been a warm, heartfelt feeling to know it was so well received," Holter said.

"So, the big question: Will we do it again? Definitely yes. The old motto adapted from a movie

("Field of Dreams") — 'build it and they will come' — is not just a fairy tale.

"We've learned over time, in other aspects of life, that if you believe in something, it's definitely worth taking the chance.

"Though our event went quite well," Holter continued, "next time

will definitely go better... The ball already is rolling... We'll see if everything comes together to announce something in the next coming months for a 2019 venue, with possibly an even larger rally that could possibly turn into a re-occurring event.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16 ►



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



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

## Bus rally

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

“Our endeavors and quest to preserve history is something we’re obviously passionate about ... It’s all about sharing with the public to help keep alive what others before us started, and to encourage others to follow long after we’re gone,” Holter added.

Inevitably and unavoidably, the rally had no shortage of challenges. Hurricane Irma, which hit Florida and other southern states right before the rally, forced a number of coach owners to cancel plans to attend.

Unseasonably hot weather hit Indiana and other Midwestern states the week of the rally. The average high for late September in Evansville is 79. It was in the low to mid-90s for the three days of the rally.

The warm temperatures discouraged some owners from making the trip to Evansville, fearing the added strain on vintage bus A/C and cooling systems might be too much.

“We totally understand,” said Holter. “Mother Nature is what it is.”

Two other — of the many, many — noteworthy buses at the rally were the pair trucked to the show by Greyhound Lines.

Greyhound sent the two oldest buses in its Los Angeles-based historic fleet. One was a 1914 right-hand drive Hupmobile, which is a restored replica of the first bus operated by Greyhound founder Carl Eric Wickman from Hibbing to Alice, Minn., to transport iron miners.

The other was Greyhound’s dazzling 1931 Mack bus, which was originally designed for Greyhound by the Mack Truck Co. The 1931 Mack Greyhound is a near twin to the coach made famous in the 1934 motion picture “It Happened One Night,” which is periodically shown on Turner Classic Movies. Much of the movie is set on an overnight bus trip.

The film is famous because it was the first motion picture to win the top-five Academy Awards (best movie, best director, best actor, best actress and best writing). It starred Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert and is often credited with inventing the romantic comedy genre.

The Greyhound Mack has still-comfortable, mohair-covered seats stuffed with horsehair. Each window has full side curtains. It was the most luxurious bus of its day and the first to be linked to the slogan, “It’s as sleek as a Greyhound.”

It is estimated that Greyhound

spent upwards of \$20,000 to have its two vintage buses trucked to the rally.

Still, the unabashed “bus star” of the rally was a sightseeing coach created by a Mack/Volvo/Isuzu/UD truck dealer based in Roseville, Minn., with branches in six other Minnesota cities.

The bus folk attending the rally appeared only modestly chagrined that the most spectacular bus at their rally was the brainchild and creation of a truck guy, Greg Nuss, chief operating officer of Nuss Truck & Equipment of Roseville.

Nuss is building a collection of restored and rebuilt vintage Mack Trucks and he had gotten to the point he wanted to create a one-of-a-kind “Mack Touring Coach” with a “sight ‘C’ing cabin.”

What he ended up with is a world-class bus creation.

The basis of the bus is a 1926 Mack AP hook-and-ladder fire truck chassis, with design of the completely handcrafted, metal-framed bus cabin based on horse and motorized sightseeing vehicles of the early 1900s.

All of the metalwork was custom made, much of it using vintage tools like an English wheel, and a specialty wood-working company supplied wood flooring; ceiling, bulkhead and sidewall panels; running boards; and cabin trim that was so exquisitely and finely detailed and finished it looks too nice to be real, but it is.

The 1926 Mack Touring Coach has a near 21-foot wheelbase and is powered by a 707-cubic-inch, six-cylinder engine that develops 106 horsepower. Power is delivered to the rear wheels via a dual-chain drive.

The Evansville show marked only the third time the Mack Touring Coach has been displayed publicly. The first two occurred at the Antique Truck Club of America show in Macungie, Penn., and the American Truck Historical Society in Des Moines, Iowa.

While the 1926 Mack coach runs and is driveable, it is essentially a show bus. It was trucked to the rally in a covered semi-trailer.

The focal point and catalyst for the show — besides the rare buses — was the former Greyhound Bus Terminal in Evansville.

The 78-year-old bus station is believed to be one of only two surviving examples of the Art Deco architecture adopted by Greyhound for new terminals in the late 1930s.

The former station has been completely renovated. Indiana Landmarks, which spent two years restoring and repurposing the



A 1956 Greyhound Scenicruiser (PD4501-771), left, and a 1958 General Motors 4104, center, in Trailways livery, were among the 85-plus buses and motor coaches at The BusBoys Vintage Bus Rally.



An estimated 3,000 to 4,000 Evansville residents and bus enthusiasts from across North America didn’t let 90-degree temperatures keep them away from the show buses.



Little guy, big bus. Easily the most impressive bus at rally was this unique, handcrafted 1926 Mack Touring Coach created by a Minnesota truck dealership. The workmanship is exquisite.



Voigt’s Bus Service of St. Cloud, Minn., recreated the company’s first new school bus, a 1952 Chevrolet-Steelcraft. Behind it is a 1948 International KB6 school bus owned by Hoglund Bus Co. of Monticello, Minn.

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Bus rally

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

building, helps Indiana communities and individuals rescue endangered landmarks.

As a result of the extensive renovation, which included removing and refurbishing the building's exterior steel panels, the station appears today as it did nearly 80 years ago, with the exception of minor signage.

Most of the space in the former Greyhound station, which is near downtown Evansville, has been leased to a regional chain of restaurants, Bru Burger Bar.

The bus show also made a strong point of promoting the heritage of the North American bus industry.

At an awards luncheon on the last day of the event, eight bus museums and history groups gave short presentations on what they are doing to preserve the industry's history and heritage.

At the awards lunch, 10 owners were recognized for their efforts to preserve their buses. The winners were:

- Specialty Bus — Greg Nuss (1926 Mack "Touring Coach")
- Original Coach — Chuck Schroedel (1974 GM 4108A)

- Modified Coach — John Maryo (1954 Flxible Visicoach)
- Original Private Coach — Michael Lillard (1975 MCI MC-5a)
- Modified Private Coach — Joe Moore (1985 Prevost)
- Original School Bus — Tim Schubert (1968 Ford Superior)
- Modified School Bus — Tom Kline (1948 International KB6)
- Original Transit Bus — Manuel Cappel (1967 GM 5303)
- Modified Transit Bus — Paul Collyer (1968 GM 5303)
- Farthest Traveled — Frank Gonzales (1954 GM Scenicruiser), Los Angeles

The rally ended with a bus parade through downtown Evansville. Nearly 70 buses hung around to participate in the parade.

The BusBoys Collection started as a hobby of the Holter brothers while operating their companies, Richfield Bus Company and Rochester City Lines. Dan Holter is general manager of Rochester City Lines, while Stan is G.M. of Richfield, which is a member of International Motorcoach Group.

Their vintage bus collection includes more than 90 buses — transit and intercity — plus school buses and novelty vehicles.

**Right:** Greyhound Lines had its impressive 1931 Mack coach trucked from Los Angeles to Evansville, Ind., for the rally.

**Below:** The focal point of the rally was this restored and rebuilt Greyhound terminal, circa 1939. Next to it is a 1970 Richfield Bus MCI MC-7, owned by the Holter family, organizers of the rally.

Photos by Tom Barrows, Ross Gabrick, Dave Millhouser and Fred Rayman



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## Crowd sourcing

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the New England Patriots game Sunday through Rally,” McCaughey said. “It’s really interesting to watch it happen. We can log on to see the number of passengers and watch it grow. Those are seats that are booked and paid for.”

Pre-selling seats to the big game is one thing. Assigning equipment to daily commuter runs is another.

OurBus, based in New York City, arranges commuter service to New York City from outlying suburbs.

“The difficult thing about commuter routes is that you go in-bound in the morning then out-bound eight hours later,” Hellman said.

The OurBus solution is helping those carriers fill runs from New York City to Washington, D.C., and back during the mid-day hours that otherwise would be down time.

The “Request-a-Route” page on the OurBus website “allows commuters to create their own dedicated, efficient bus routes. To actually start the service on the route, we need to find a busload of commuters who have a similar trip in mind. This usually is about 75 to 100 people.

“We need many more people to sign up for the route than we need to fill the seats,” Hellman said. “Some people aren’t commuting every day. On the other hand, there are probably more commuters than we will have signed up.”

OurBus has been in business for a year and a half and has worked with 10 to 15 carriers. Some have not been booked on a regular basis, Hellman said.

OurBus lists seven inbound and outbound commuter runs connecting Livingston and West Orange, N.J., to the New York Port Authority Bus Terminal. Two schedules link Montgomery Township and Kendall Park, N.J., to the Grand Central Terminal in New York City.

Passengers also can book tickets with OurBus for rides between New York City and Washington, D.C., as well as several cities be-

tween them.

The crowdsourcing commuter model could work in many major cities, Hellman said.

“Anywhere there is a large number of long-distance commuters who are not well-served, it could work,” he said. “For commuter routes, we want to get as close as possible to people. Even if we are charging the exact same fare as a bus or train five miles from them, we save them time and money. They don’t have to pay for driving or parking.”

Another service linking intercity bus routes with riders is likebus.com, a sister company to information technology developer United Bus Technology.

“We partner with 15 bus operators that travel all over the East Coast. We have about 100 destinations and over 400 daily scheduled runs,” said Tingting Guo, general manager of likebus of McLean, Va.

Passengers using likebus for booking can find a bus running the New York-Washington, D.C., route almost every hour, she said. Online ticketing increases passenger convenience and sometimes gives bus operators enough advance notice to add a bus to a busy route.

“Before we came to the market, the bus companies were selling their tickets at the station. Many times in the holiday season the seats are sold out after the customer traveled a long way to the bus station, so they are told they have to come back tomorrow,” Guo said. “With the online ticket service, they can purchase their ticket in advance and have their seat guaranteed.”

She said the online books can alert operators to customer demand that warrants an additional bus on a scheduled trip. “That happens a lot during the holidays.”

Some OurBus routes leave the Northeastern states and head to Atlanta and Florida. It also offers routes within Florida.

Rally Bus, based in New York City, launched its business by crowdsourcing groups for travel to sporting and entertainment events. Its website boasts of 640,535 seat reservations to 3,245 cities.

“We have expanded to charters

and commuting,” said Numaan Akram, founder and chief executive officer of Rally. “Our current commuter routes are minimal as we are in ‘stealth mode’ for that service. Additionally, we are piloting projects with communities in Alabama and Wisconsin.

“In Alabama we have created a bus pooling service for employees. We have access to employee home addresses so we can create optimal routes. The employer subsidizes the service as a benefit as it helps with retention and the transportation issues that low-income workers face,” Akram said.

“In Wisconsin, the goal is to get urban dwellers out to the suburban office parks. This can be the young and upwardly mobile who are flocking back to the cities as well as lower-income warehouse workers.”

Ford Motor Company bought into the crowdsourcing transportation business last year when it purchased a San Francisco start-up called Chariot for \$65 million. The company fields more than 200 14-passenger Ford Transit vans in San Francisco and recently expanded to Seattle and Austin, Texas. It plans to put 60 vans on the streets of New York City this fall.

Chariot CEO Ali Vahabzadeh refers to the company’s business model as “micro-transit” and describes it as supplementing existing options with flexible, fluid routes that can respond quickly to customer needs, such as service delays on existing transit lines. Chariot said it will consider a new route if it is endorsed by 49 potential riders.

Is crowdsourcing creating new passengers or competing with motorcoach operators and transit agencies for existing passengers?

“It is largely both,” Hellman said. “Even if we create a new service where there wasn’t one, it is going to be taking people away from whatever they were doing before.”

As for his business, crowdsourcing has been an adjunct, said McCaughey of Flagship Trailways.

“So far I don’t feel threatened by it. I don’t see them taking peo-

## UMA accepting Green Highway nominations

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The United Motorcoach Association is seeking nominations for its Green Highway Award, which is presented annually to a coach operator during UMA Motorcoach Expo.

The award, which is sponsored by Motor Coach Industries, was introduced at Expo in 2008.

It recognizes motorcoach travel as a viable solution for reducing carbon emissions and encourages industry leadership on environmental issues.

The award will be presented to an operator that has demonstrated the greatest commitment to “green stewardship” in the areas of internal corporate initiative, external

corporate stewardship, or community and industrywide green leadership.

Three aspects of a company’s operation will be considered: administrative, maintenance and equipment, and facility.

The award will be presented during Expo 2018 in San Antonio, which will be held Jan. 6-10.

Nominations are due by Nov. 13. Please fax nominations to 703-838-2950 or email *Carrington Blake at cblake@uma.org*. Nomination forms can be found at <https://motorcoachexpo.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/09/2018-Green-Highway-Award-Nomination-Final.pdf>.

ple off somebody else’s bus. I see them putting people on a bus.”

He added, however, that he doesn’t offer commuter service. “I have a lot of colleagues that do. I have heard from some commuter services or line carriers that they do feel threatened (by crowdsourcing).”

The presence of motorcoach-grade equipment on commuter runs does differentiate OurBus service for riders familiar with public-transit-quality buses, Hellman said.

“Their motorcoaches probably don’t have fare boxes, but we provide mobile ticketing and payment. It makes it easy for bus companies to enter intercity or commuter routes.”

The OurBus website posts pictures of motorcoaches carrying the company logo. However, Hellman said, “We don’t own or operate buses. We are a broker. Some of the companies that work with us have wrapped their buses with our logo.”

Some past efforts by third parties offering ticket sale and passenger aggregation services did not go well as bus operators found reimbursement lacking after trips had been completed. In the online age of payment at booking, financial transactions should be more streamlined, providers said.

“Payment from riders is collected via our app or website,” said

Hellman of OurBus. “Operators don’t have to install fare boxes or set up their own system to collect tickets. That is especially important if they are a charter provider with no line runs. Exact payment cycles depend on our contracts with individual companies.”

Providers of service through likebus typically are paid on a monthly basis, said Tim Wilson, director of business development at sister company United Bus Technology.

“We have a contract with each company and they can select the option for how we do payments to them,” Wilson said. “We come from a motorcoach background and realize cash flow is important. We usually settle up at the end of the month for transactions that month.”

Akram said Rally pays ahead of time and directly. “Once an operator has become preferred (a favored provider) we use direct bank transfers to avoid credit card fees.”

Crowdsourcing bus travel has been done in Europe for quite some time and has been pretty successful, said Craig Smith, chief executive officer of Martz Group, a 200-coach operator in Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

“It is just making its way here and it is too early to tell what will happen, but at this point it seems to be something customers are looking for,” he said.

Martz Group operates “a few little commuter runs in the outlying suburbs of New Jersey” through OurBus, Smith said.

“They are able to set routes by letting people tell them where they want to go other than us just establishing runs. We may be getting a new source of customers. Maybe it is simply educational — getting some of the general public who just don’t know about buses.”

## Calendar

### November 2017

**5-8 Ontario Motorcoach Association Annual Conference & Marketplace**, The Westin Harbour Castle Hotel and Conference Centre, Toronto, Ont. Info: [www.omca.com/event/marketplace](http://www.omca.com/event/marketplace)

### December 2017

**6-7 UMA Safety Management Seminar**, NTSB Training Center, Ashburn, Va. Info: [www.uma.org/events](http://www.uma.org/events)

### January 2018

**6-10 UMA Motorcoach Expo 2018**, San Antonio, Texas Info: [www.motorcoachexpo.com](http://www.motorcoachexpo.com)

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