

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

FMCSA Administrator Ferro: Put safety first, profits second

WASHINGTON — The motorcoach industry has a very good safety record, but carriers that put profits before safety will feel continued pressure from regulators, says Anne S. Ferro, administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

“The motorcoach industry generally has a strong safety record. There are lots of options for good carriers for folks to choose,” Ferro said in an interview with *Bus and Motorcoach News*.

“There are a lot of good companies operating out there.

“Folks have every reason to travel by motorcoach. It is safe, affordable, convenient and comfortable. It is a strong and strengthening option.”

On the other hand, she said, “We will continue to make sure unsafe operators are off the road until they fix their problems. I view our job as making sure that sense of safety is felt by passengers.”

Ferro said last year’s “Operation Quick Strike” inspection blitz conducted by her agency — aimed specifically at motorcoach operators — “really focused on getting

us closer to that objective.”

Ferro was appointed administrator of the FMCSA by President Obama in 2009. She was president and CEO of the Maryland Motor Truck Association from 2003 to 2009, and served as Maryland motor vehicle administrator from 1997 to 2003.

Last February, the FMCSA announced a “targeted safety crackdown using specially trained investigator teams that will focus on high-risk motorcoach companies.”

Ferro and then-Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood said inspectors and auditors would undergo specialized training to investigate “key areas of operations at motorcoach companies deemed to be high-risk carriers,” including operating schedules, equipment storage and driver qualifications.”

A press release announcing the crackdown, later named Operation Quick Strike, cited a pair of high-visibility motorcoach crashes, one in San Bernardino, Calif., and another about 15 miles east of Pendleton, Ore.

Last month, the FMCSA announced that Quick Strike had re-



Anne Ferro

sulted in 52 carriers and 340 vehicles being placed out of service or shutdown. According to an FMCSA press release, these were other results of Operation Quick Strike:

- 214 top-to-bottom compliance investigations completed
- 20 motorcoach companies immediately shutdown for violations and posing an imminent hazard to the public
- 32 companies issued “unsatisfactory” safety ratings and shutdown after failing to remedy critical and acute violations
- 28 companies took corrective action to fix safety violations investigators uncovered to avoid being shutdown

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CDL/medical card merger deadline fast approaching

WASHINGTON — An important deadline is rapidly approaching for motorcoach drivers and their employers.

On Jan. 30, all commercial drivers’ license holders must have supplied information about the type of driving they do — a process known as self certifying — and the status of their medical certificate/card to their state driver’s licensing agency.

“Neglecting to complete these tasks before the Jan. 30 deadline will mean serious consequences for CDL holders and the companies they drive for,” warns Jill Schultz of J.J. Keller & Associates.

Noncompliance means the driver will lose his or her commercial driving privileges.

The driver’s license will be downgraded to a non-CDL class, so

the driver can’t operate vehicles that require a CDL until full CDL privileges have been reestablished.

In many cases, the process for having CDL driving privileges restored will be very time-consuming and costly for the driver, according to Schultz.

Bus company owners and managers are responsible for making sure all their drivers are fully qualified to operate the vehicles they are assigned to drive.

Operators are not to dispatch a driver on its roster whose license has been downgraded.

Here are steps drivers and operators already should have taken — or should take immediately.

The first piece of information a driver must provide to his or her state licensing agency is a self

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USDOT audit finds failings in border inspection program

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration’s program to inspect Mexico-based buses and drivers at the U.S. border earned decidedly mixed marks in the latest annual review by the U.S. Department of Transportation Office of the Inspector General.

The FMCSA “generally complies” with safety criteria established by Congress, but the agency “has not taken sufficient actions to fully address our prior recommendations for improving its capacity to inspect buses,” the report states.

During the audit that began in September 2012, the inspector general found huge gaps in inspections, with some border areas going days with no bus inspections.

The auditors also discovered

that FMCSA inspectors were unable to check the status of Mexican commercial drivers on the Commercial Driver’s License Information System (CDLIS) for 11 months because of a computer software problem.

The glitch also prevented states from reporting Mexican drivers’ conviction information into the system.

The FMCSA eventually implemented alternative procedures that allowed inspectors to access information and for states to report, but the backlog of conviction data could have delayed enforcement action against Mexican drivers who should have been disqualified for moving violations, such as driving under the influence or excessive

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Safety expert Norm Littler dies

WOODBIDGE, Va. — Norm Littler, a man who never owned a bus but who made the roads of North America safer and more pleasant for everyone who ever traveled by bus, died late last month after a long illness. He was 61.

At the time of his death, Mr. Littler was vice president of regulatory affairs at the American Bus Association and executive director of the Bus Industry Safety Council.

Prior to that, he spent eight years as senior vice president of government and industry relations

at the United Motorcoach Association.

“He was a tireless and dedicated champion of safety, security and responsibility,” said Steve Sprague, a long-time friend and former colleague who served as executive vice president and chief operating officer of UMA during Littler’s years there.

“He was also...the most committed co-worker I’ve ever known,”



Norm Littler

Sprague added.

In announcing Mr. Littler’s death, the ABA noted he had worked in the transportation field for more than 40 years, and was considered by his colleagues to be one of North America’s leading motorcoach safety experts.

During his years at both ABA and UMA, Mr. Littler was known for his accessibility, freely offering operators guidance and advice on safety and regulatory issues. He said that working with association members on these issues was one

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Museum 'jewel' hangs on wall

Graphic panels tell story of bus manufacturing

HERSHEY, Pa. — It may be the only one of its kind in the world...but it's easy to miss if you're not looking for it.

Bus and motorcoach enthusiasts, industry veterans and tourists come from every corner of the globe to look at the extensive bus collection at the Museum of Bus Transportation here.

Co-located with the Antique Automobile Club of America Museum for the past 14 years, the museum displays buses representing every era and region, literally since the North American industry began.

The shared facility, with autos and buses, is arguably the nation's premier automotive museum, and is a real treat for anyone interested in the history of motorized vehicles.

But the hidden jewel in the exhibit area of the bus museum isn't a vehicle, or its collection of vehicles, but rather the "Timeline" panels that adorn the walls.

Sponsored by individuals and organizations that love the industry, they are the only graphic record in the world of a continent's bus manufacturing history.

In fact, they cover not just the U.S., but Canada and Mexico, too...the whole of North America.

Robert L. Smith, Museum of Bus



Transportation vice president and the man responsible for researching and assembling the Timeline, says he's unable to find any other country that has recorded the comprehensive story of its bus building history — and he has looked.

Smith, now retired, was a successful executive in the motorcoach business for many years, and has taken a number of "busman's holidays," visiting bus manufacturing facilities all over the world.

Even in a motorcoach mecca like Europe, where builders have done an outstanding job of recording their own histories, there is no place you can go to see how the continent's entire bus manufacturing industry evolved.

The same is true of Asia, South America and Australia.

Eleven years ago, the museum board

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Asian-American bus operators establish own trade association

NEW YORK, N.Y. — A group of East Coast motorcoach operators met last month to form what is being called the Asian-American Motorcoach Owners Association to assist with regulatory compliance and to give them a voice in dealing with government officials.

The many of the companies attending the meeting often are referred to as "Chinatown" operators because they got their start by linking major eastern cities with the Chinatown areas of New York City, Boston and Philadelphia.

"We think that if we work together as a group we will be able to address some of the concerns that the (USDOT) has with some Asian-American coach owners," said Dru Carey, a New York attorney who has represented Asian-American motorcoach operators before the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

"From a public relations perspective, we think the DOT has misperceptions about our safety or our compliance. We want to show them that we are as concerned about those issues as any of the older, large bus companies."

Carey was interviewed after the group's organizational meeting.

"Quite a number of carriers attended the first meeting and a number of other carriers will be coming on board," Carey said.

"We have some of the largest Asian-American motorcoach owners all the way down to owners with one to three buses. We are trying to get the full array of owners because they have similar concerns despite their size differences."

She declined to estimate the number of carriers who may join the association, saying she does not know how many Asian-American carriers operate in the U.S.

"There are scores around greater New York and the East Coast corridor. I am going to California in February to recruit West Coast Asian-American motorcoach owners to join us."

The group will soon meet again to elect a board of directors and officers.

The association will speak for owners who feel their operations are stigmatized as low-budget and unsafe, Carey said.

"Statistically, we want to show that this is not the case. We want to show that the managers of very small bus companies are concerned about safety and are trying to follow all the multitude of requirements being demanded of every carrier.

"We want to show that we are safe. In this era of compliance and enforcement, it seems our voices are not being adequately heard. We think if we speak as a group more attention will be paid to our needs and

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THE DOCKET

Feds shutdown L.A. operator that 'shared' authority

LOS ANGELES — Federal regulators ordered a bus company based here to immediately cease operations because of widespread safety violations, including running buses for companies that previously had been ordered shutdown.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration took the action against an outfit called Its Good Promotion, and its owner John Andrew Ciego.

The FMCSA said the operation presented an "imminent hazard" to

drivers, passengers and other motorists.

According to FMCSA documents, investigators found Its Good Promotion/Ciego did not properly repair, inspect and maintain vehicles, and it operated unsafe buses from at least four other companies that had been shutdown by the FMCSA.

A Los Angeles television station reported that two of the companies accused of using Its Good Promotion as a shell are based in Phoenix.

It was the second shutdown ordered by the FMCSA within a month involving an operator running buses for companies previously ordered closed.

In late November, the FMCSA ordered Phoenix-based Autobuses Rayon Inc. to immediately cease all passenger transportation operations. Investigators found that Autobuses Rayon had allowed at least three other unsafe bus companies, previously shut down by FMCSA, to continue services using vehicles with the registration markings of

Autobuses Rayon. (See Dec. 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

The FMCSA said most of the Its Good Promotion buses were operating between Mexico and the United States.

Regulators also discovered that the company did not ensure its drivers were tested for drug and alcohol use, allowed a driver who tested positive for illegal drugs to work, and employed drivers who did not hold valid U.S. commercial licenses or did not meet medical qualifications.

"Safety is our top priority, and we are working hard to thoroughly investigate and shutdown bus companies that put people in harm's way," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx.

"Deliberately evading federal safety regulations that protect travelers on our highways and roads has serious consequences and will not be tolerated."

Executives at the company, which operated at least 16 buses, could not be reached for comment.

Feds to probe new-entrant testing

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration will launch its effort to require prospective new bus and truck operators to establish their knowledge of regulations and industry practices by listening to views on the issue.

The agency is conducting an all-day listening session here Jan. 13, in conjunction with the American Bus Association Marketplace.

The day's proceedings are being webcast.

The MAP-21 federal highway and public transportation legislation enacted in June 2012 requires the FMCSA to assess the knowledge of proposed new entrants.

The FMCSA said the listening session is the first in a series it will conduct to gather input on potential test topics, the relationship between the knowledge testing requirement and the agency's Unified Registration System program, and test development and delivery.

The FMCSA asked that par-

ticipants in the listening session consider the following questions in preparing their comments:

- Should the exam be limited to the applicable FMCSA regulations or include both the regulations and industry best practices?
- If the exam covers industry best practices, what specific best practices should be included on the exam?
- What industry best practices manuals/publications are available for new entrants to study prior to taking a proficiency exam?
- Are private-sector training courses available to teach new entrants industry best practices?
- Should the FMCSA limit the exam to company officers or employees responsible for safety and compliance, or should the agency allow safety consultants to complete the exam on behalf of the new entrant?
- Should the test results be linked to specific individuals identified on the registration ap-

plication with a requirement that the new-entrant entity have a "certified" individual who passed the exam in a position responsible for safety and compliance?

- And should the new entrant be required to update its registration information whenever these individuals are replaced/reassigned during the new entrant monitoring/oversight period?
- Should the FMCSA develop and deliver the test directly to the new entrant applicants, or should the agency rely on a private-sector entity to handle the testing, with the results being transmitted directly to FMCSA?
- Do private-sector companies or organizations currently conduct testing concerning industry best practices?
- Should the testing be conducted at testing centers, or should FMCSA allow online testing?

The listening session is open to the public. No pre-registration is required.

Mass. considers miles-traveled tax

BOSTON — Massachusetts could be the next state to try a vehicle-miles-traveled tax as part of an effort to find alternatives to paying for highway projects.

A bill has been introduced in the state legislature directing the Massachusetts Transportation Department to launch a pilot pro-

gram with 1,000 volunteers, similar to experiments that have been tried in Oregon over the past half-dozen years.

Supporters in Massachusetts say the trial is needed to access the feasibility of an alternative to fuel taxes for raising money for state transportation projects. They note that fuel consumption has fallen, resulting in less fuel tax revenue.

Lawmakers are wrestling with how to monitor driver miles, using a vehicle-miles-traveled tax, while protecting privacy.

The latest program launched earlier this year in Oregon is made up of 5,000 volunteers, but only includes motorists because the state already has a weight-distance tax for commercial vehicles.

Those participating pay 1.5 cents per mile driven, but the state will reimburse them for any difference between the mileage tax and the traditional cents-per-gallon fuel tax.

So far there's no indication the Massachusetts plan would involve commercial vehicles.

States increasingly turning to tolls for highway money

More roadway tolls and other fees are in the works for this year, according to a forecast report by Fitch Ratings, as state governments try to find ways to fund transportation infrastructure needs as the flow of federal money continues to shrink.

"We're already seeing states raising fees of all kinds on transportation users and we expect to see more of that over the next year," Eric Kim, Fitch's director of public finance, told a leading trucking publication.

"We don't have specific prospects for what kinds of fees exactly, but state governments are certainly moving in that direction."

Such moves are occurring as federal fuel tax revenues earmarked to fund transportation needs continue to fall, and states try to fill the resulting "funding gap" with other methods.

One such method Fitch expects to see deployed more frequently in the coming year is public-private partnerships, or "P3" deals, whereby private firms invest in transportation projects alongside state and local governments, using tolls to collect a return.

"The growing use of P3 transactions to construct new or expand existing projects is largely motivated by limited resources at the state and local level, combined with uncertainty on future federal funding levels," said Scott Zuchorski, director in the Fitch's global infrastructure group, in a

statement.

"While not a panacea for all funding issues, governments are increasingly looking to P3s for transportation projects where the economics make sense," he said.

"Two-thirds of states currently have P3 enabling legislation in place, and given the size of future capital needs, Fitch expects transportation P3s to continue to rise in 2014."

Emma Griffith, one of Fitch's directors, says the firm believes not only will tolling become more widespread in 2014, especially for the construction of new roadway capacity, there will be "increasing" pressure to place tolls on what were beforehand "free" roads as well.

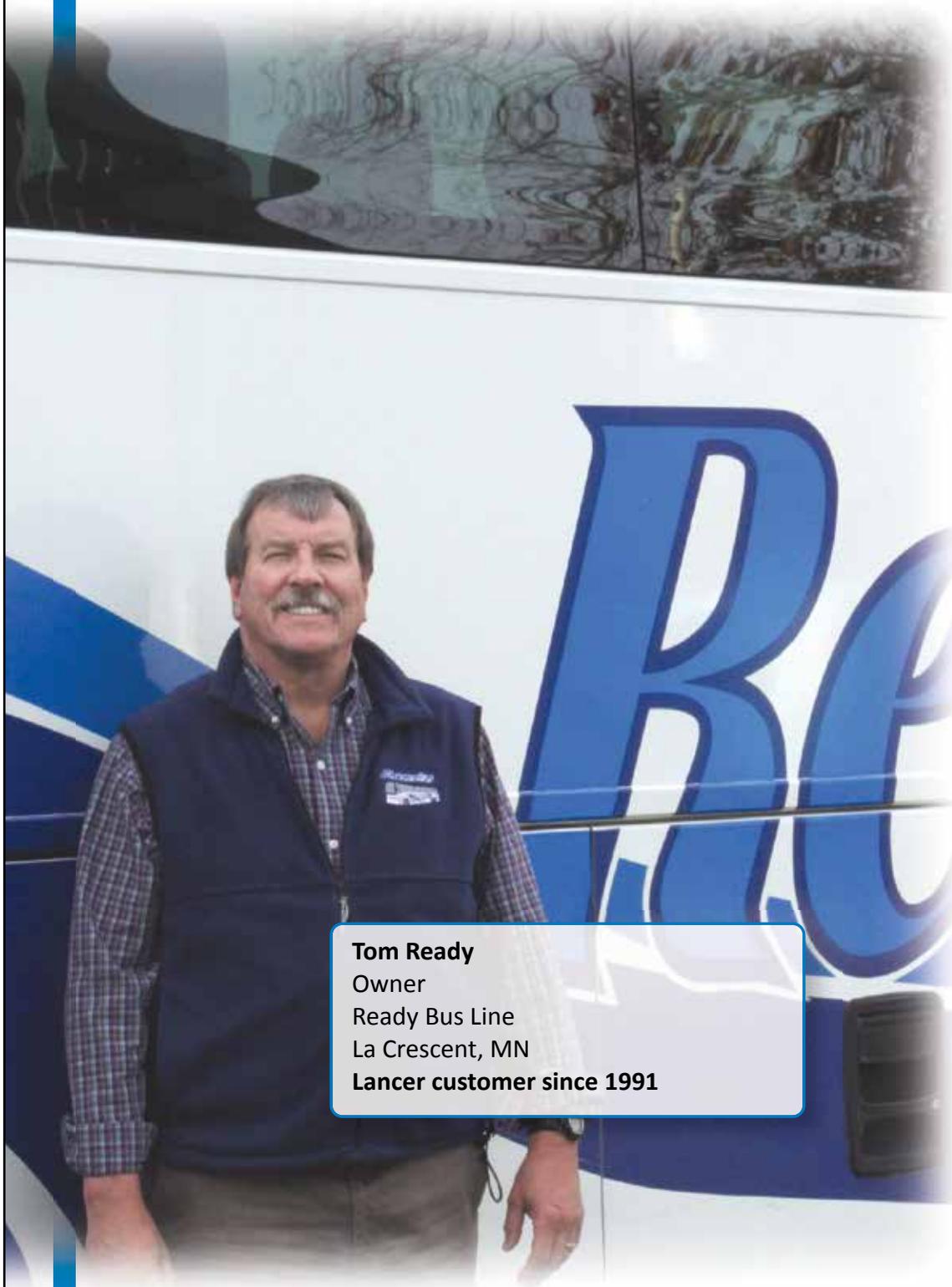
"Uncertainty at the federal level is contributing to this trend," she said, noting that the current, soon-to-expire highway bill — MAP-21, short for the "Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century" Act — incorporated two transfers of monies from the federal government's general revenue fund to the shrinking Highway Trust Fund to offset declines in fuel tax revenue.

"Federal funding to state DOTs is down 22 percent, including a 7 percent cut due to sequestration, which is leading states to implement new (fuel) taxes, fees and P3s to maintain and expand roadways," Griffith pointed out.

"It's all related to that growing lack of federal funding."



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Legislation aimed at jitneys pressed in New Jersey

TRENTON, N.J. — A bill applying state regulation to so-called jitney buses is racing through the New Jersey legislature in response to a July crash that killed an eight-month-old girl who was being pushed in her stroller on a sidewalk.

Senate Bill 3082 is being called “Angelie’s Law” after Angelie Paredes, who was killed in West New York, N.J.

Idowu Daramola, 48, of Queens, N.Y., was allegedly using a cell phone while driving a jitney that veered off the street and hit a lamp pole that fell onto the stroller, which was being pushed by the girl’s mother.

The bus then hit a tree, knocked over a traffic light and struck a parked car that hit three other vehicles. Seven people were injured.

Daramola faces charges of death by auto, reckless driving, and using a cellphone while operating a vehicle. He was initially held on \$250,000 cash bail.

In New Jersey, the death-by-auto charge could bring a prison sentence of 5-to-10 years.

Daramola was driving a bus owned by Boulevard Lines of Ridgefield, N.J.

Senate Bill 3082 was introduced last month.

Regulatory complications

One of the bill’s sponsors alleges that some of the region’s jitney operators are not properly licensed. He acknowledges that federal action will be needed to fully regulate jitneys, which often travel across state lines.

Investigations following the incident determined that Daramola was moonlighting from New York City’s Metropolitan Transportation Authority to drive for Boulevard Lines. Daramola also had received six traffic tickets dating back to 2011, according to the *Newark Star-Ledger*.

While Senate Bill 3082 appears to be aimed at unregulated carriers, Boulevard Lines is a 15-vehicle carrier registered with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

Immediately after the fatal crash, the FMCSA said it would act on a request by U.S. Sen. Robert Menendez, D-N.J., to investigate Boulevard Lines.

However, the FMCSA website lists 10 inspections that had been conducted at Boulevard within the previous 24 months. Eight of the inspections uncovered 18 vehicle maintenance violations, four of which resulted in out-of-service orders.

Two drivers were ordered out of

service, one for driving without a valid medical certificate and another for “lacking physical qualification(s).”

Jitneys are widely operated by private companies to ferry commuters from the heavily congested suburbs of northern New Jersey to New York City. West New York is across the Hudson River from Manhattan. Hudson County is one of the most densely-populated counties in the country.

Targetted: ‘Autobuses’

The bill, aimed at “certain autobuses,” would require bus owners to assure that their drivers hold valid commercial driver’s licenses. Police would be required to obtain a blood sample from an autobus operator involved in an accident causing death or serious injury unless the operator is clearly not at fault.

The law also would create a “Bill of Rights for Customers of Certain Autobuses.”

Owners would be required to prominently display a telephone number for passenger complaints on the inside and outside of vehicles and then promptly respond to complaints. The owner would be responsible for ensuring that all operators are “well trained.”

Drivers would be required to

limit passenger loads to the vehicle’s safe limits; keep vehicles “clean, well-maintained, and in good working condition at all times;” refrain from smoking, using a cell phone or engaging in other distracting activities; and “comply with all federal and state laws governing the safe operation of a motor vehicle.”

The difficulty of focusing the bill on a specific class of vehicles is reflected in its definition of autobuses and vehicles that would not be affected:

“For the purposes of the bill, an ‘autobus’ is defined as a privately-owned passenger motor vehicle operated in intrastate or interstate business over the public highways in this state for the transportation of not more than 40 passengers for hire.

“The following types of vehicles are not considered autobuses for the purposes of the bill: vehicles engaged in motorbus regular-route service, taxicabs, hotel buses, school buses, Atlantic County and Cape May County jitney buses, limousines, vehicles used in a ride-sharing arrangement, motor buses owned by, or under contract with, the New Jersey Transit Corporation, charter bus operations, off-airport parking shuttles, and special paratransit vehicles.”

Quick action

Senate Bill 3082 was introduced in the New Jersey Senate Transportation Committee on Dec. 12. It received two readings and was sent to the full Senate on the same day. It was considered by the Senate on Dec. 19. On first reading it was passed 25-0. A second reading was heard that day before the bill was passed on a voice vote.

Senate Bill 3082 authorizes fines beginning at \$1,500 for autobus owners who “knowingly” permit anyone to operate a vehicle without a valid commercial driver’s license. The fine increases to \$3,000 for a second violation and \$5,000 for third and subsequent violations. The current state law fines driver’s but not carrier owners for commercial license violations.

Violations of other safety regulations in the law would be subject to fines of \$1,000 for the first offense, \$2,000 for the second violation and \$5,000 for third and additional violations.

The bill would require the New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety to establish procedures for enforcing the law.

An identical bill, known as A4546, was introduced in the New Jersey Assembly.



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Drug-testing rules continue to dog some operators

Random drug and alcohol testing has been a fact of life for U.S. motorcoach companies and their drivers for 25 years.

Yet, testing for drugs and alcohol continues to be a common violation for companies that end up being put out of service by federal and state investigators during both routine and targeted Compliance Reviews and inspections.

The drug and alcohol rules that apply to the bus and truck industries devolved directly from President Ronald Reagan's "War on Drugs."

Federal employees were the first to be subjected to pre-employment and random tests.

Not long after, the U.S. Department of Transportation turned its attention to workers occupying safety-sensitive positions, including ship captains, pilots, and truck and bus drivers.

Random drug testing has been mandated for U.S. commercial drivers since the late 1980s and remains so to this day.

Each year 10 percent of a carrier's drivers are to be picked randomly for breathalyzer testing, while 50 percent are chosen for drug testing.

The same formula applies to the U.S.-certified drivers working for Canadian operators.

Early criticism

From its inception, critics of the USDOT program pointed out that it had political and ideological overtones.

The policy was challenged as a violation of the Fourth Amendment, but was upheld in 1989 in a split five-four decision by the U.S. Supreme Court. The court agreed that random drug testing was invasive by its nature but was trumped by a concern for public safety.

But extending suspicionless testing to Canadian drivers be-

came a pricklier problem, as human rights issues in that country are given a different weight than they are south of the border.

Moreover, illegal drug use and addiction is considered a disability by Canadian courts, and those employees with a problem must be accommodated.

Historically, random workplace drug and alcohol testing had been tried in Canada over the years. Toronto Dominion Bank and Imperial Oil were among employers who sought to institute drug testing regimens in the 1990s. But unlike the U.S. Supreme Court, the Ontario Appeals Court ruled against Imperial Oil's drug testing program because it failed to show a link between the capacity to perform a job and impairment.

But the appeals court did allow for random alcohol testing and drug testing in certain situations (reasonable cause, post-accident and return to duty), and agreed that drug testing could be a pre-employment

condition for those applying to safety-sensitive positions.

Many Canadian carriers have drug-and-alcohol testing written into their policies and require all their drivers to be tested.

Some critics continue to maintain that random drug testing of drivers not required to go to the United States run contrary to Canadian Federal Human Rights Commission rulings.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission states its position on its website: "Because drug tests do not actually measure impairment, random drug testing is an unjustifiable intrusion into the rights of employees."

Testing commonplace

But drug testing is well-established in the U.S. where, according to 2011 figures, 57 percent of businesses require pre-employment drug screens.

Many state legislatures are also looking to test people who apply

for welfare and benefits.

Drug testing providers are big business and a growing sector that supports a surfeit of labs, collection sites, databases, technicians, doctors and substance abuse professionals.

A plethora of products is available to analyze saliva, hair follicles, perspiration and urine, and the results can provide a detailed account of the presence of illegal or controlled substances.

Non-USDOT drug screens can also scan for up to 10 categories of illicit or prescription substances. And there are lots of vendors ready to supply products and services should a company want to go this route.

Testing for what?

Urine testing is the cheapest of the tests and the established methodology for USDOT standards. Five families of drugs are tested, often called the NIDA Five: amphetamines, cocaine, codeine, marijuana, and PCP.

Some experts say the scope of

the testing isn't broad enough, missing entire categories like tranquilizers and psychoactive drugs, while including PCP which has all-but disappeared.

Much-abused prescription drugs like Vicodin and Oxycodone weren't even around decades ago when the standards were developed.

Some drugs have been added more recently to the NIDA Five, including ecstasy and heroin.

But cannabis is complicating things, as 17 states and Canada currently allow the use of medical marijuana if it's prescribed by a doctor, and voters in Colorado and Washington approved recreational use of marijuana in those states, starting this year.

The USDOT website is emphatic that no positive test for THC is acceptable for commercial vehicle drivers.

Testing procedures

The protocol for collecting samples for USDOT testing is generally considered almost fool-proof. The procedures are spelled out in the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations.

Those being tested must empty their pockets, and the water in the toilet is dyed blue, and the sample has to come back at a certain temperature.

Prescription drug abuse is the fastest growing drug problem in North America, and positive results for codeine are not uncommon with or without prescriptions.

With the prevalence of drug use in North American society, it's not surprising that some people try to mask their sample by taking additives or tampering with their urine.

Testing organizations report that individuals spend an awful lot of money on the Internet buying products designed to fool the tests. Few, if any, work, they say.

50% drug-testing rate continues

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Transportation announced that truck and bus fleets must again randomly drug test the urine of at least half their drivers during 2014.

The USDOT, which issued the mandate last month, is still compiling drug-test results for 2012. If the 2012 rate turns out to be lower than 1 percent, the industry could become eligible to halve the testing, to 25 percent of its drivers.

The rate for 2011 was 0.9 percent.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has not specified a date when the 2012 results would be released, but the agency usually publishes them in

January.

Airlines, railroads, public transit agencies, the U.S. Coast Guard and others are required to test at the lower level because those sectors reduced their random drug-positive rates below 1 percent in successive years.

Meanwhile, there has been a push in the ground transportation industry in recent years for the federal government to allow the use of hair testing instead of urine testing, in the belief it would further reduce positive tests.

Companies that have instituted a hair-testing program for pre-employment have seen significant drops in their random positive drug-test rates and have seen their

post-accident rates go to near zero.

Hair testing is seen as more accurate than urine testing and reveals drug use over a greater period of time.

One large trucking company has reported that it reduced its random positive rate to less than 0.25 percent because it does hair testing at the pre-employment level.

Federal law requires only urine testing for transportation workers, but more companies reportedly are doing hair testing to improve safety and decrease insurance costs.

The USDOT enforces the drug-testing rules, but the Department of Health and Human Services certifies which testing methods are acceptable.

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Online: www.uma.org

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MCI offers mobile maintenance

DES PLAINES, Ill. — Motor Coach Industries is deploying mobile maintenance units — to make motorcoach maintenance more convenient — in Los Angeles, Orlando and the greater New York/New Jersey area.

MCI said top-level technicians will man the units, which will carry diagnostic tools, repair essentials and critical parts required for the inspection, maintenance and repair of all motorcoach makes and models.

The units will travel to serve customers from the nearest MCI Service Center Monday through Friday, plus will be on call 24-hours daily.

“Operators will benefit by this service because they can schedule a repair or preventative maintenance appointment at their convenience, even at off-peak hours,” said Patrick McGuire, director of MCI Service Centers.

“The mobile maintenance trucks will allow us to better serve operators at their own facilities, providing them convenience and also saving them time and money.

“This new service will make it more convenient and cost effective for motorcoach operators to keep fleets in compliance and up to



date, with safer equipment with fewer breakdowns.”

In addition to performing scheduled maintenance, the mobile units also will provide emergency roadside service as well. “The mobile maintenance units will be equipped for emergency repairs for all makes and models of coaches which may need emergency assistance,” said McGuire.

Services will range from diagnostics to brakes, air leaks and lights, to belts, hose replacements and other issues. Technicians will be able to create records and issue

paperwork on site.

The units have GPS systems that will allow technicians to provide estimated times of arrival and continued communication.

To arrange a visit from an MCI mobile unit call (888) 912-9983.

MCI operates service centers near the three metro areas targeted for the mobile service units — Orlando, Los Angeles and Philadelphia, plus others in Chicago, Dallas, Montreal and Loudonville, Ohio. All of the centers offer comprehensive repair, maintenance, modification, warranty, paint and

Growing travel problem: Service animal fraudsters

CHICAGO — While pet lovers think it's cute to take their Fifi everywhere, service animal fraud is becoming “a nightmare” for bus companies, airlines, true animal handlers, bus and airline passengers, and other businesses, reports Open Doors Organization, which provides training in dealing with service animals.

Open Doors points out there are no federal laws making service animal fraud a crime, but some states do have ordinances.

Since certification of service animals is not required in the U.S., enforcement is difficult.

So, what's a bus operator to do when a customer has a pet in tow and says it's a service animal?

Even before such a customer shows up, operators should Google “service animal certification,” and learn to recognize the fraudulent IDs, vests and other items for sale online that owners often buy for their pets.

These pet IDs and outfits do not have to be accepted as proof the pet is a service animal since

documentation is not required.

Instead, says Open Doors, ask questions.

“What tasks or functions does your animal perform for you?”

“What has it been trained to do for you?”

“Would you describe how the animal performs this task for you?”

The verbal response from the pet owner must be credible, says Open Doors.

The animal also has to be well behaved and under the control of the handler.

“Emotional support animals,” often incorrectly called “therapy animals,” do not fall under the federal definition of service animal since they are not trained to perform a task.

They do not have to be accepted into places of public accommodation unless allowed by a more broad state or local statute.

They also do not have to be transported, except by air carriers, which may require a letter from a licensed medical professional.

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Chicago tower planning scary 'tilt'

CHICAGO — Owners of the John Hancock Observatory, which is on the 94th story of the building of the same name, reportedly are planning an addition aimed at scaring the wits out of visitors.

The Tilt would be a glass-enclosed box protruding from the observatory that would hold several visitors.

Once strapped in, the box

would tilt, creating downward-facing views of Chicago's downtown.

Currently, Chicago's scariest attraction is the Ledge on the Skydeck of the Willis Tower (formerly the Sears Tower), which is located on the 103rd floor of that structure. The Ledge is a glass cubicle that extends about four feet out from the building.

The John Hancock Observato-

ry is owned by Paris-based Montaparnasse Group 56, which purchased the attraction in 2012 for \$44.2 million.

Willis Tower was knocked from its perch as the Western Hemisphere's tallest building last year by the new One World Trade Center in New York.

The two Chicago towers are about a mile-and-a-half apart.

Tennessee 50-acre theme park now open

UNION CITY, Tenn. — A \$100 million theme park, Discovery Park of America, opened here last month.

The 50-acre attraction is in upper northwestern Tennessee, not far from the state borders with Kentucky and Missouri.

Union City resident Robert Kirkland, who built the park and its principal 70,000-square-foot facility, has pledged to contribute

\$3 million annually to its operation.

Since Union City only has a population of 11,000, Kirkland hopes the park's proximity to three interstate highways, plus the absence of a competing attraction, will mean lots of drive traffic and bus groups.

Discover Park has themed sections and exhibits on natural and regional history, dinosaurs, Native

Americans, energy, transportation, science, the military and space flight, an earthquake simulator, a 120-foot glass-encased observation tower, an old train depot, and art displays.

Despite its "off-season" opening, the park is operating Tuesdays through Sundays.

For more information, go to www.discoveryparkofamerica.com, or call (877) 885-5455.

National Cathedral implements fee

WASHINGTON — Starting Jan. 1, the famed Washington National Cathedral, the site of funeral services for many famous U.S. leaders, began charging a \$10 visitor admission fee in response to a

looming budget deficit.

Children and seniors pay \$6.

A spokesman for the cathedral noted that visitor traffic has been trending down slightly, and the average donation at the church's wel-

come desk also was lower.

The church needs to generate more revenue to avoid deficits and to focus on raising money to fix damage from the August 2011 earthquake.

Study: Best, worst travel taxes among top destinations in U.S.

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Taxes levied specifically on travel-related services continued to grow last year, according to a report released by the education and research arm of the Global Business Travel Association.

The annual study examines hotel lodging, restaurant meal and car rental taxes in the top 50 U.S. destination cities.

The association noted that those taxes are regularly used to fund local projects unrelated to tourism and travel.

"Governments insist on treating travelers like their ATM," said Global Business Travel Association Executive Director and COO Michael W. McCormick.

The Global Business Travel Association study presents several views of travel taxes "to help users make informed choices."

The top 50 markets are ranked by overall travel tax burden, including general sales tax and discriminatory travel taxes, and by discriminatory travel tax burden, excluding general sales taxes to

count only taxes that hotel stays, meals and car rentals.

The top 10 U.S. cities where travelers incur the highest total tax burden in central city locations, factoring in general sales taxes and discriminatory travel taxes, are: Chicago, \$41.04 in combined single-day travel taxes; New York City, \$38.65; Minneapolis, \$36.70; Kansas City, Mo., \$36.61; Indianapolis, \$36.; Cleveland, \$35.41; Boston, \$35.32; Seattle, \$35.11; Nashville, Tenn., \$34.75, and Houston, \$34.16.

The top 10 U.S. cities where travelers incur the lowest total tax burden in central city locations, factoring in general sales taxes and discriminatory travel taxes, are: Fort Lauderdale, Fla., \$22.61; Fort Myers, Fla., \$22.61; West Palm Beach, Fla., \$22.61; Detroit, \$22.80; Portland, Ore., \$22.86; Orange County, Calif., \$23.61; Burbank, Calif., \$24.59; Honolulu, \$24.67; Ontario, Calif., \$24.93, and Orlando, \$24.94.

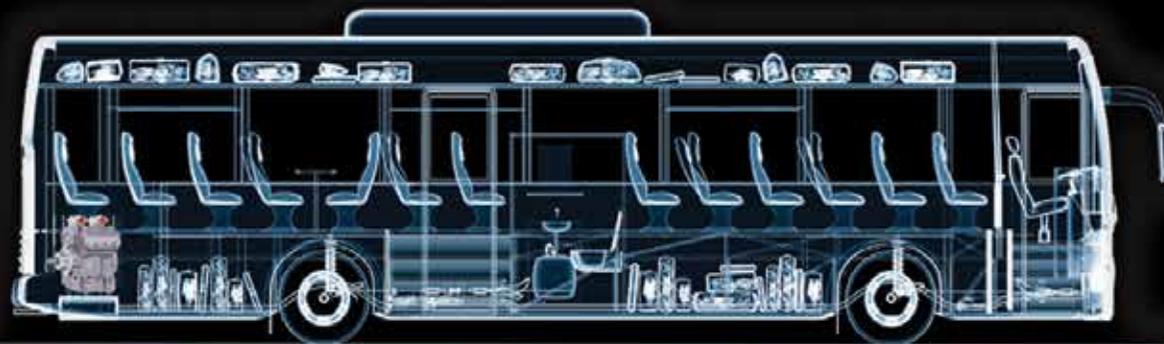
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Asian-American

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

concerns.”

Asian-American operators believe their safety records are negatively influenced by the increased scrutiny they receive from inspectors.

“When you go into the statistics of compliance, that is where they run into trouble because they are being stopped and inspected at eight to 10 times the rate of the large carriers,” Carey said.

“If they are inspected more often, more problems like burned-

out taillights are going to be found.”

Language does make it difficult for some Asian-American motorcoach operators to comply with the numerous and complex regulations facing them, Carey acknowledged.

“All of the members of AAMOA speak English, but for many of them it is not their first language. Our training is going to make sure that every company has a manager whose English is good and who can read and translate any documents or requirements created by any agency.”

In March the association will

‘In this era of compliance and enforcement, it seems our voices are not being adequately heard.’

conduct the first of what are intended to be quarterly educational sessions.

“We will have courses on all manner of compliance and safety

issues regarding the vehicles and drivers and the record keeping that the companies are required to maintain in order to show that they are compliant with all the safety procedures,” Carey said.

“We want to end up with a very uniform set of practices any inspector will see when they come to an AAMOA company. The file cabinets and records of a three-bus operator are going to look very similar to the paperwork of a 30-bus company, two or three states away.”

After assisting association members in conducting safe operations, she said, “The second

tier of importance is to have our members be treated equally, fairly and with due process in any proceedings in front of any adjudicative body.

“I don’t mean to denigrate any federal or state agencies in their quest for safety. Of course, the goal of our motorcoach association is to have our members be safe.

“But the biggest problem we see is the lack of due process in the business setting — not knowing where you stand with an agency that has the power to put you out of business, and not being able to do anything about it. That is unconscionable.”

Norm Littler

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

of the most enjoyable aspects of his job. “Norm Littler was a treasured member of ABA’s staff,” said ABA President and CEO Peter Pantuso.

“He was a close friend to his office colleagues and to ABA members. Because of Norm’s expertise and passion, when a passenger gets on a motorcoach today, they are safer. We owe Norm a large debt of gratitude for his many years of professionalism and dedication to making the industry safer.”

A native of Winnipeg, Manito-

ba, Mr. Littler served in the Canadian Air Force as a flight engineer on C-130 transport airplanes.

He worked for nearly 17 years at Motor Coach Industries, first in the research-and-development division and then as administrator for regulatory and product-related legal affairs and risk management.

Mr. Littler held an Insurance Institute of America accreditation in risk management.

In 1995, he joined the ABA where he worked for three years before moving to UMA. He rejoined the ABA in 2006 because of the challenge of reinvigorating the Bus Industry Safety Council and

because “they made me a fabulous offer,” he said with characteristic frankness at the time.

He had been the council’s executive director for the past seven years.

The ABA said Mr. Littler’s expertise had been very important on several key pieces of motorcoach safety legislation and regulation concerning driver fatigue, alcohol and drug testing, and other issues. He worked closely with regulatory agencies and congressional officials.

He was the former chairman of the Highway and Motor Carrier Sector Coordinating Council, which acts in an advisory capacity

to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and a dozen other federal departments and agencies on issues relating to security and infrastructure protection, preparedness and response for commercial highway transportation.

In addition, Mr. Littler was a member in the Society of Automotive Engineers, a former chairman of the Transportation Research Board Commercial Truck and Bus Safety Synthesis Program Oversight Committee, a member of the International Association for Counterterrorism and Security Professionals, and a member of the Roadway Safety Foundation.

Outside the office, Mr. Littler was involved in efforts to help abused women and children. Before his death, he set up a non-profit foundation to protect at-risk families.

“Those of us who were with him through the end know that Norm insisted that there be no sadness at his passing,” said Sprague. “He had enough time to plan every contingency with the intention of leaving only good memories.

“He wants a celebration of the things he loved, the causes he pursued and the freedom he enjoyed.”

Information regarding memorials will be provided later.

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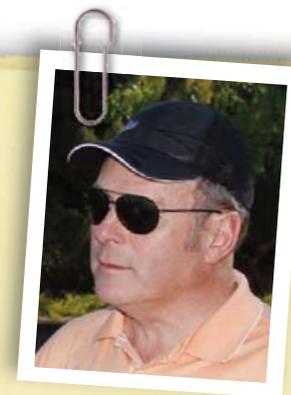
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Case Study: Lessons from Travel Exchange



Who: Larry Hundt
Company: Great Canadian Holidays & Coaches
Location: Kitchener, Ontario CANADA
In Business: Since 1984

Challenge:

Larry Hundt has specialized in group travel to destinations across North America for 30 years. His company, Great Canadian Holidays & Coaches, got involved in the motorcoach side of the business in 1998, and it now operates a full motorcoach division with more than 50 coaches, two garages and one of the most modern fleets in Ontario. Searching for a travel industry show to meet his needs for both motorcoach and tour operations, Hundt spent years going to various events that focused on one or the other. In 2013, NTA and the United Motorcoach Association came together to offer the full spectrum of North American travel buyers and sellers on one floor, Travel Exchange.

How Travel Exchange Helped:

The inaugural show in Orlando, Florida, attracted more than 3,600 travel professionals who had access to both the tour and coach sides of the tourism industry, which included Hundt. "I see the potential for other companies that are similar to us that really need to be able to take their tour planners and their coach operations people to the same show so they can better understand both sides of the industry," he said. "I think it helps the motorcoach people like me to connect with the tourism segment. I'm excited about this show not only for ourselves, but for what it can do for the industry and for people that haven't quite discovered it yet. This relationship that NTA and UMA have developed is extremely good for the industry and for our businesses."

Why Should Motorcoach Operators and Tour Operators Attend Travel Exchange?

Business not only is conducted on the floor at Travel Exchange, there are evening social functions at iconic places throughout the host city, breakfasts and luncheons that feature dynamic speakers and entertainment, and a range of educational sessions that focus on business resources, specialized markets, professional development and more. "I really believe we have, working in our best interest, two organizations that really get it and really believe in serving their segments of the industry," Hundt added. "We felt that Travel Exchange was by far the best show that we have ever experienced."



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CDL/Medical card

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

certification of the type of commercial driving the driver performs. All CDL holders must complete this self certification.

The self-certification document must be obtained from the agency that issued the driver his or her driver's license.

Many states allow drivers to download a self-certification form from the state licensing agency website or provide the information via an online portal.

Some states require the driver to complete a specific form that was mailed to the driver's home address.

New York, for example, began mailing its self-certification notification letters to every New York-registered CDL holder last summer and continued such mailings until Oct. 28.

New York also urged motor carriers to check with their drivers to make sure they received the letter and complied with it.

Drivers who moved or somehow didn't receive the form must act to obtain one and complete it.

No matter the format being used by individual states, when

completing the form, drivers must certify they operate or expect to operate a commercial vehicle under one of the following four categories:

1. Non-excepted interstate: Applies to drivers who operate in interstate commerce and are subject to the qualification requirements in Part 391 of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations.

2. Excepted interstate: Applies to drivers who operate in interstate commerce, but are exclusively involved in "excepted" operations under Sections 390.3(f), 391.2, 391.68, or 398.3 of the FMCSRs.

3. Non-excepted intrastate — A driver who operates only in intrastate commerce and is subject to state qualification requirements.

4. Excepted intrastate — A driver who operates only in intrastate commerce and is exclusively involved in operations that are excepted from the state's qualification requirements.

In addition to providing self certification, all non-excepted interstate drivers must provide a current, valid copy of their medical certificate/card.

A few states are also requiring non-excepted intrastate drivers to provide a valid copy of their medi-

'I do not trust state or federal agencies to keep accurate records.'

cal certificate/card. It is expected that more states will require intrastate drivers to turn in this document in the future.

Record keeping

Once a state receives a driver's self-certification and medical card information, it will be placed on the driver's driving record.

That means that as of Jan. 30, drivers will no longer be required to carry their medical card, and motor carriers will not be required to maintain a copy in the driver's qualification file.

However, given that this is a new process, some observers worry about glitches and are urging drivers to keep records showing they have complied.

"I do not trust state or federal agencies to keep accurate records," said one driver. "History has proven their record. We, the driver, will pay the price for their mistakes."

So, how will a carrier verify that

a driver is physically qualified?

By obtaining a copy of the driver's driving record and including it in the driver's qualification file.

By Jan. 30, and then each time a medical certificate/card is renewed and turned in to the driver licensing agency, the motor carrier will need to obtain a new driving record that reflects this current information and place it in the driver's qualification file, says Schultz.

This requirement is in addition to the annual review of each driver's driving record that must be performed by the motor carrier.

The operator will need to take timing into account when obtaining the new MVR that reflects the driver's current medical status.

Once a driver turns in his or her medical certificate/card to the state licensing agency, the state has 10 days to enter this information into the driver's driving record.

During this time, the operator must keep a copy of the driver's medical certificate/card in the driver's qualification file. Regulations allow an operator to maintain this copy of the certificate/card as proof of medical qualification for a maximum of 15 days from the date it was issued.

Also, when it comes to timing, drivers will need to plan in advance, cautions Schultz.

If the expiration date of the driver's medical certificate/card passes, and the driver's MVR is not up to date, the state will begin the process of downgrading the driver's CDL to a non-CDL class.

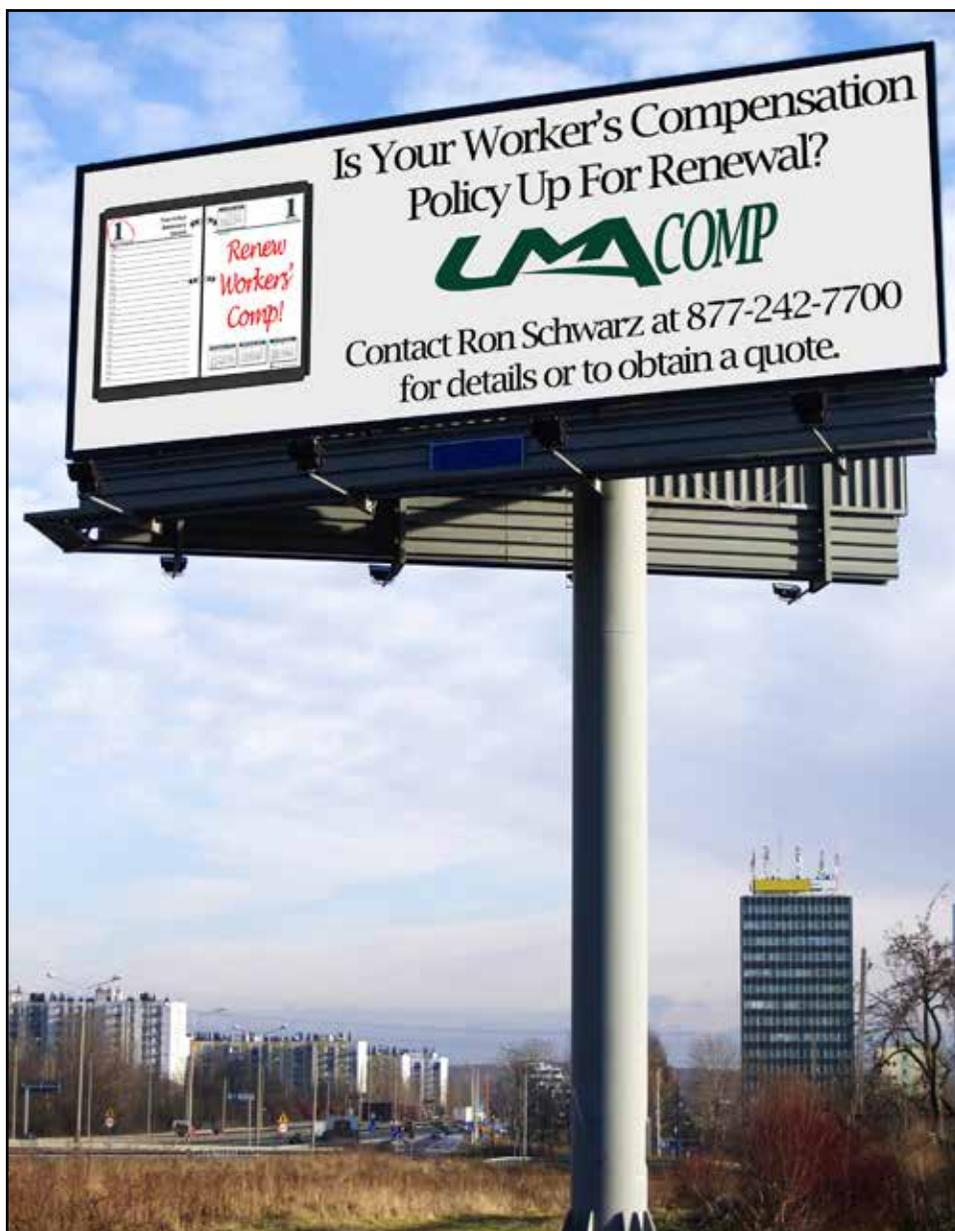
Bottom line

Organization and information are critical when it comes to meeting these requirements, says Schultz.

Drivers need to be aware of the requirements and follow the process implemented by their state licensing agency.

Bus operators need to be informed of the processes in each state where they have a driver licensed. Carriers also must have policies and procedures in place to assure that all drivers comply with the requirements in a timely manner.

Compliance is a responsibility that is shared by both bus operators and drivers. And, for both, it's serious business. A driver could lose his or her commercial driving privileges if they do not comply. An operator could end up short on drivers.



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Case Study: Lessons from Travel Exchange



Who: Paul Nakamoto
Company: Gray Line of San Francisco,
San Jose & Monterey/Super Sightseeing
Location: San Francisco, CA
In Business: More than 25 Years

Challenge:

In 2013, Paul Nakamoto found himself in the market for new transportation. His company—Gray Line of San Francisco, San Jose & Monterey/Super Sightseeing—specializes in sightseeing tours that depart from San Francisco and go to nearby destinations such as Yosemite National Park, Monterey, Napa and Sonoma wine country, and Muir Woods National Monument. Using larger motorcoaches on tours that traveled Highway 1 through California's central coast region presented a challenge...length restrictions.

How Travel Exchange Helped:

CH Bus Sales/TEMSA was an exhibitor at Travel Exchange on the UMA Motorcoach EXPO floor, and it didn't take long for Nakamoto, who attended the event as an NTA member, to connect with this Platinum Sponsor. "I went to the CH Bus Sales/TEMSA exhibit, and they were doing test runs," Nakamoto said. "I actually rode in one in the parking lot of the convention center. I was very impressed and shared with our president that I had seen the bus and rode in it. I called him from the floor immediately and said, 'This is a beautiful coach!' We purchased one and leased two, and we're in the process of acquiring at least two more for next year, maybe three."

Why Should Motorcoach Operators and Tour Operators Attend Travel Exchange?

Duane Geiger of CH Bus Sales/TEMSA, a 20-year motorcoach industry veteran, said Travel Exchange opened new doors and exposed his coaches to a different audience. "NTA and UMA members share in the mission to promote the transportation and tourism industry, so this joint effort allows us to display our products to both groups. Also, by including NTA, it allows tour operators to see our midsize coaches, which wouldn't be possible if it weren't for this joint show floor."



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History panels

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

asked Smith to undertake the Timeline Project.

“It had been a dream of Richard J. Maguire to tell the history in some manner, and we had to carry through with his dream,” says Smith.

Until his death in 2001, Dick Maguire had been a towering figure in the bus industry. In addition to his many years successfully operating Capitol Trailways out of Harrisburg, Pa., Maguire had restored several historic coaches on his own.

He then became a key figure in starting the Museum of Bus Transportation, giving generously of his leadership skills, time and money.

The Timeline Project officially began in 2003, with the decision to organize it by decades. Smith spent countless hours researching in libraries all over the country, as well as Canadian archives and the records of the various state and federal regulatory organizations, compiling a comprehensive history of bus manufacturing in North America.

In addition to the eye-straining and back-breaking research, Smith had to find sponsors for each of the panels because the high-quality printing and mounting was costly.

The Timeline was finished in sections, as each decade was completed the panels went on display.

It is fascinating to see the progression of bus design laid out graphically, beginning with bodies mounted on car and truck chassis; over the years it became apparent that differing applications required changes in features.

Starting with modified automobile bodies, three distinct branches of vehicle design evolved. The panels cover all three — motorcoach, transit and school bus — as they adapted to meet



The panels are organized by decades, manufacturers and regions. Foreign bus builders supplying the North American market also are featured.

new demands and utilize improving technology.

By 2010, the Timeline was nearly complete and the museum board recognized it had a real jewel.

The board decided to print the Timeline in book form, and published Motorcoach Milestones, which is available through the museum gift shop.

Like the mounted panels, the book is probably the only one of its kind in the world.

Anyone interested in buses should make visiting the museum a priority.

In addition to the Museum of Bus Transportation, the Hershey area is a popular family destination.

Extra time should be saved to look at the Antique Automobile Club collection, which is included in the admission price, as well as the Timeline panels...the only history of its kind in the world.

For more information, go to www.buseum.org.

nel who are currently attending the agency's training academy, the report says.

According to Bureau of Transportation Statistics, more than 421,000 buses, carrying more than 5.6 million passengers entered, the United States during fiscal 2011 and 2012.

In all, FMCSA and state officials inspect drivers and/or vehicles for approximately 7 percent of bus entries in the highest volume counties, similar to the 8 percent inspection rate for large truck entries, according to the report.

To compile the report, auditors observed inspection operations at 10 of 27 passenger carrier border crossings, including crossings in the six highest volume counties — all in California or Texas. Taken

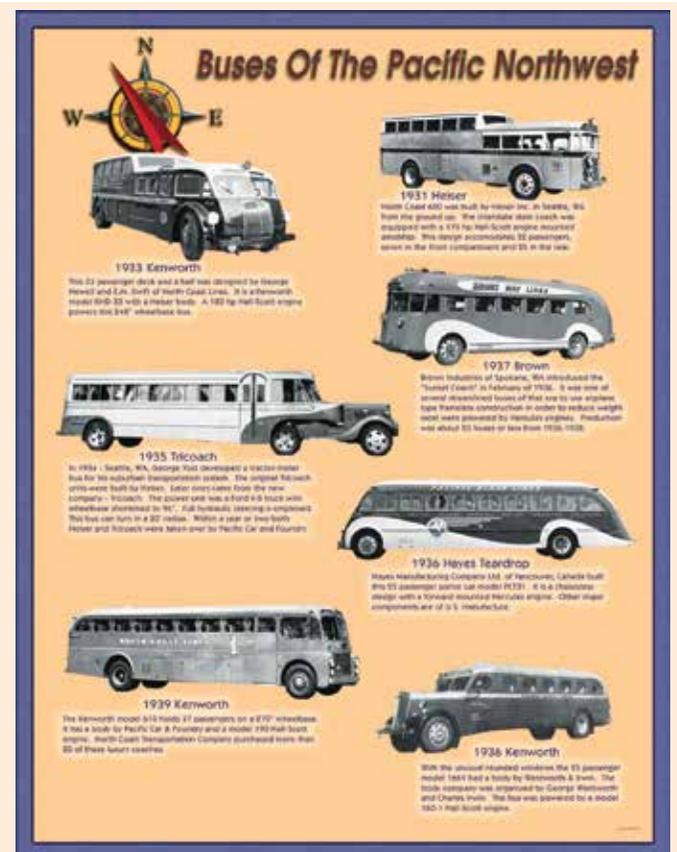
together, the top six represent 96 percent of bus entries and 94 percent of passenger entries, with San Diego alone representing almost half of all border entries.

Other potential trouble spots the report cited:

In 2009, the FMCSA agreed to revise its plan to find ways to inspect more vehicles and to conduct inspections during all periods the crossings are open.

It also agreed to work with U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the General Services Administration to look at how to make bus inspection areas safer and easier to use with better lighting, temporary inspection canopies, traffic-flow modeling or other measures.

However, the FMCSA's plan



Border audit

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

speeding, the report states.

The agency subsequently provided USDOT auditors with documentation that the backlog had been cleared.

In response to the audit, FMCSA Administrator Anne S. Ferro wrote that the system will be monitored “so drivers are promptly disqualified, as needed,” and asked that the issue be closed. The inspector general concurred.

The audit also found that the number of FMCSA enforcement personnel at the border dipped slightly from 243 staff members in 2011 to 233 as of January 2013.

The FMCSA has plans to fill vacancies with nine border person-

falls short on both counts, according to the report.

For example, during a site visit to a crossing in Nogales, Ariz., conducted at night, auditors observed bus traffic between 10 p.m. and 1 a.m. without inspection.

“FMCSA officials stated that they do not schedule inspections at this crossing,” the report says.

“Moreover, our analysis of fiscal 2012 bus inspections in El Paso and Hidalgo counties (in Texas) identified 37 periods, 18 and 19 respectively, of seven days or more without a single passenger carrier inspection. Three of these periods equaled or exceeded a month without an inspection,” according to the report.

In all, the inspector general recommended the FMCSA take

five actions, including updating and periodically reviewing the bus safety plan, and negotiating a written agreement with U.S. Customs and Border Protection “to establish standard inspection protocols for safe and efficient bus inspections across the border.”

Ferro concurred with the recommendations, and wrote, in part: “The FMCSA will complete the update of its bus safety plan by March 31, 2014, and update the plan every 24 months thereafter, unless special circumstances dictate shorter update intervals.”

The agency will also “initiate negotiations for a written agreement with CBP at the headquarters level to address bus inspection protocols at border locations by December 31, 2014,” she wrote.

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Ferro interview

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Inspectors also assessed the records of 1,300 carriers that had undergone minimal scrutiny and selected 240 for follow-up investigations.

"This year (2013) we evaluated and enhanced our investigation methods to dig deeper than ever before and uncover dangerous patterns of unsafe behavior and business practices," Ferro stated in a press release. "Now we are training all investigators to utilize the new tactics we employed during Operation Quick Strike."

Compliance or safety?

Quick Strike created consider-

able industry grumbling that investigators spent a lot of time and effort seeking paperwork shortcomings that may have affected passenger safety but indirectly.

Ferro insisted in her interview with *Bus and Motorcoach News* that last year's investigations went far beyond paperwork.

"We took a very deep look into our compliance review process to understand what aspects of our review get to the core issues and what ways we can improve. One of those strategies needed to be an enhanced investigative approach," she said.

"We did more extensive interviews with drivers and maintenance people, as well as inspecting vehicles at the time of those inves-

tigations. A paper review to check a carrier's adherence to good management practices is not enough."

Additional industry grumbling concerned the FMCSA's ability to shutdown a carrier subject to an appeal or implementation of an improvement process of indeterminate length, which could be the death knell for carriers unable to withstand months without revenue.

Ferro also said that shutdown orders are not issued lightly. "A law enforcement officer at a roadside inspection or a terminal puts a driver or vehicles out of service after things have reached a critical stage of severity. It goes beyond a one-off and starts to show a pattern."

Enforcement issues

The administrator was also asked about industry complaints over the severity of inspections in certain parts of the country.

The Pennsylvania Motorcoach Association, for example, asked state officials in October for a meeting to discuss an inspection crackdown that followed a deadly June 27, 2011, crash on the Pennsylvania Turnpike. A motorcoach slammed into the back of a flatbed trailer, killing the coach driver and injuring 24 passengers, as well as the driver of the truck.

The two drivers assigned to the bus had not undergone pre-employment screening for controlled substances and had falsified their log books to make it appear they had received adequate time off duty before the trip. The company's owner closed the carrier, which FMCSA found in violation of regulations covering controlled substances and alcohol testing and driver records of duty status.

Two months after the accident the FMCSA awarded \$7.9 million in grants to the Pennsylvania State Police, Public Utility Commission and Department of Transportation to boost traffic enforcement, conduct safety audits of truck and bus companies and upgrade the state's commercial driver's license test to an electronic format.

In the following eight months, state police announced four motorcoach enforcement crackdowns and pored over 1,042 coaches, placing 85 vehicles and 47 drivers out of service.

Operators told *Bus & Motorcoach News* that Pennsylvania subjected buses to multiple and sometimes lengthy inspections that interfered with operations and disrupted passenger travel schedules.



Anne Ferro

International Motorcoach Group issues 'Travel Resource Guide'

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. — International Motorcoach Group has released its 2014 *Travel Resource Guide*, which embraces the organization's new corporate branding and marketing message.

"As a planning tool, our *Travel Resource Guide* is a publication that travel planners look for each year," said Bronwyn Wilson, president of IMG.

The guide provides information important to travel planning, such as facility locations, vehicle types and sizes, and contacts. It is distributed to more than 15,000 businesses.

"We have clarified the IMG message, as we want our current and future customers to understand the difference in using an IMG company" said Wilson.

"Our tag line of 'Setting the Standards' truly represents the

commitment IMG companies have in providing driver training; safety practices and education; excellence in customer service; maintenance of fully integrated facilities that support operational excellence; plus a North American network that provides seamless support in both sales and on road support."

The 132-page publication is also available as an e-guide at www.nxtbook.com/naylor/IMGR/IMGR0013/index.php.

The International Motorcoach Group, formed 16 years ago, is a network of 49 bus operators that share a commitment "to excellence in customer service, safety, training and maintenance." The companies operate more than 7,000 vehicles, carrying more than 21 million passengers annually.

know the rules and they go out of their way to make their drivers and maintenance technicians aware of the rules. When you put safety before profit, you have a really strong company. It is the ones who are not doing that that we are looking for."

Looking ahead

Ferro declined to reveal whether an Operation Quick Strike 2014 will be undertaken this year.

"Passenger carrier safety is always a priority to us. Using our resources, with the help of our performance data, to focus on safety is vitally important. We will continue to focus on the training of inspectors."

She offered a tip for carriers that have not been visited by inspectors from the FMCSA in a while.

"If we have not looked at a company in five years, we need to be looking at them again."

Participation in United Motorcoach Association safety activities can help carriers remain knowledgeable on safety affairs, Ferro said.

"UMA should continue the training and outreach that it does. Just getting members together for conversation can help as well. Often an organization like UMA will collect areas of concern and make sure that I and my team know what their problems are."

Ferro also endorsed this publication as a source of safety information.

"*Bus and Motorcoach News* is a great and very regular source of what is important and what is happening in this industry."

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